

# CINEFANTASTIQUE®

Volume 10 Number 4

\$3.50

## THE EXPLOSIVE FILMS OF DAVID CRONENBERG

*Stone*



*THE MIND FORCE...  
Their thoughts can kill.*

# SCANNERS



PIERRE DAVID and VICTOR SOLNICKI Present A DAVID CRONENBERG FILM SCANNERS  
Starring JENNIFER O'NEILL STEPHEN LACK PATRICK MCGOOHAN  
Also starring LAWRENCE DANE MICHAEL IRONSIDE Executive Producers VICTOR SOLNICKI PIERRE DAVID  
Produced by CLAUDE HEROUX Written and Directed by DAVID CRONENBERG A FILMPLAN INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION

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**SCANNERS explodes across the U.S. on January 16th.**

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VOLUME 10 NUMBER 4

The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

SPRING, 1981

This issue marks the close of our tenth volume and first decade as *the* review of *cinefantastique*—horror, fantasy and science fiction films.

Our first issue was published in November, 1970, and it's been a prosperous ten years for the genre, and for us. As reported in our decade recap earlier this year (9:3.9:4:72), half the top 10 money-making films of all time are horror and science fiction, all released within the last 10 years. 1980 has seen the genre continue its inexorable climb to preeminence: four of the top five hits of all time are now genre films—STAR WARS (#1), THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (#2), JAWS (#3) and THE EXORCIST (#5).

*Variety*, the tradepaper of the film industry, noted the trend in a recent story headlined, "Horror, Sci-Fi Pix Earn 37% of Rentals—Big Rise During 10-Year Period." Their figures project that in 1980, genre films will generate more than one-third of all box-office rentals. In 1981, according to *Variety*, the total could reach an incredible 50 percent!

We saw the trend coming, back in 1972 when it was just getting underway. Writing in our fifth issue, we stated our goals in covering the genre: "Our purpose is to examine what is happening now on the fantasy film scene, and to bring some recognition and sense of direction to its developing preeminence as a cinema form of the '70s. Fantasy films are better than ever before, and still only a relatively undeveloped form with vast and exciting potential. Stick with us and watch the genre as it grows."

And grow it did. Some would say like a weed, considering the glut of HALLOWEEN imitators which sprang up this year, all seemingly starring Jamie Lee Curtis. That kind of unimaginative repetition normally spells the death of a cycle—and for sure, psycho, stalk-and-slash horror has had it for a while. But the genre seems healthy enough to survive the hack work. Producers are beginning to explore the diversity of fantasy and science fiction. One segment may become overexposed, but the field is here to stay, and will remain in the forefront.

Stick with us in the '80s, and watch the genre as it grows. *Frederick S. Clarke*



## 21 DAVID CRONENBERG

David Cronenberg's disturbing, low-budget shockers have made him the darling of the burgeoning Canadian horror industry. But in the United States, his films have been largely ignored—at least until now. With the upcoming release of SCANNERS, Cronenberg may yet prove to American audiences that he's among the most original directors working today.

*Article and interview by Paul M. Sammon*



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Jeannot Szwarc has paid his dues, working in television, directing flaming cockroaches in BUG and bringing JAWS II back to life. Now that he has the chance to do what he wants, with SOMEWHERE IN TIME he's attempting another resurrection: revitalizing the lost art of romantic fantasy.

*Article by Jordan R. Fox*



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With sophisticated hardware and a mastery of typographic design, Robert and Richard Greenberg have revolutionized the way movies are promoted. Now they've crossed over—designing stunning effects for the features themselves.

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*Cover illustration of David Cronenberg by Roger Stine*

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# COMING

## CONAN THE BARBARIAN

*Biceps have made Schwarzenegger rich, but don't expect a "muscle picture."*

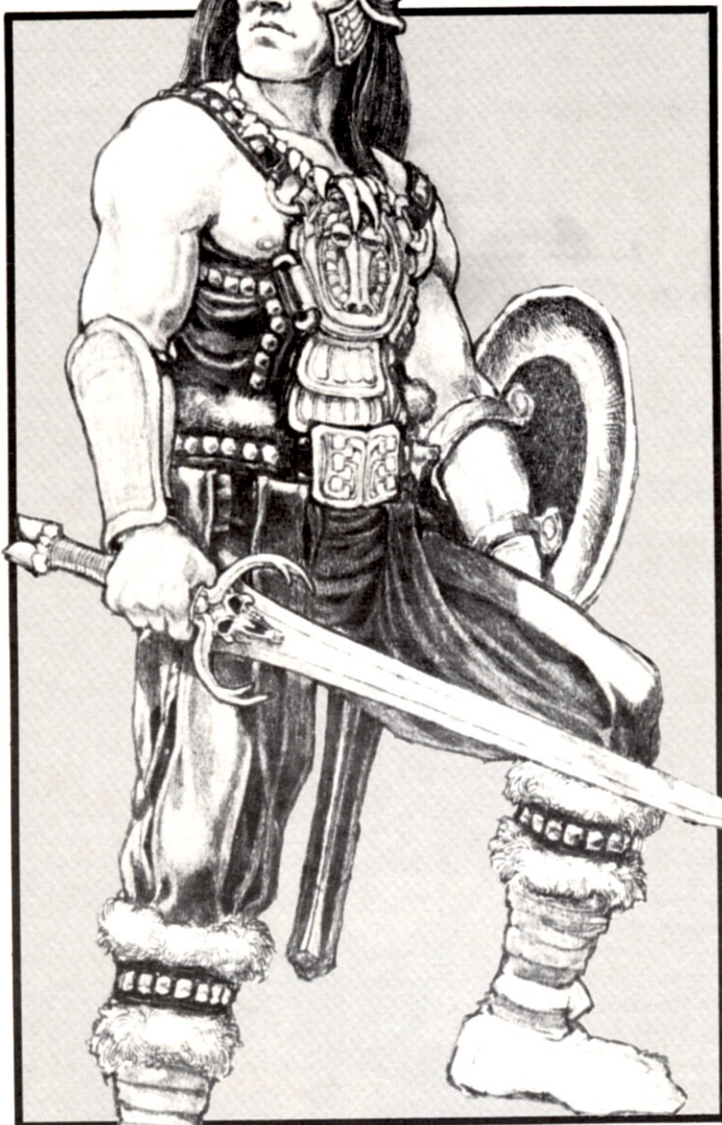
By Bill Kelley

The point of no return has passed in the much-delayed production of CONAN THE BARBARIAN [10:3:17]. The first scene in the \$22 million project has already been shot, with the bulk of principal photography finally set to begin this January for release in early 1982.

From October 10 to 13 we shot two scenes in London," explained body-builder-turned-actor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "They show Conan as a 60-year-old man, sitting there regaling his followers with his exploits at the time of Atlantis. 'I was a thief and a slayer,' he says, and he finishes off by saying, 'So sit by me and let me tell you of the days of high adventure.'"

The sequence will also double as a theatrical "teaser." In December, when Dino De Laurentiis' FLASH GORDON opens across the country, all 1,400 prints will carry a special clip featuring Schwarzenegger in costume as the bearded Conan, perched on a giant gilded throne, colored mists swirling about.

Preparations to film the rest of the sprawling epic are well underway, said Schwarzenegger. The cast, crew and director John Milius have already left for Spain—chosen over Germany, Yugoslavia and assorted American locations for its varied climate. Harsh winter locations will be filmed near Madrid in February, while the south coastal city of Almaria (where Milius filmed THE WIND AND THE LION) will provide balmy backgrounds in April. Milius, who



Arnold Schwarzenegger as CONAN THE BARBARIAN in Ron Cobb's preproduction costume sketch. Although Schwarzenegger's first claim to fame is his bulging physique (below left) and his world championship in body building, both he and director John Milius want to keep Conan clothed and avoid a Hercules-like "muscle picture" tag, as Cobb's sketch shows.

also directed BIG WEDNESDAY, is the author of the final script, said to be an original story derived from Howard, and not an adaptation. Oliver Stone (MIDNIGHT EXPRESS), who completed a draft in July, 1978 for producer Edward R. Pressman [7:3:72], will probably be co-credited for contractual reasons.

CONAN was originally set to begin shooting in January 1979, then was pushed back to January 1980, then delayed again. The difficulty in finding spectacular, unrecognizable locations was one delaying factor, legal confusion over the screen rights to Robert E. Howard's pulp-fiction hero was another. With both Press-

man and De Laurentiis vying for the services not only of Conan but of Milius as well, the inevitable solution was a co-production deal, with Universal Pictures handling distribution. Universal's release of FLASH GORDON made the tag-on trailer for CONAN a natural hook.

Apart from the change in shooting locations, CONAN has undergone some casting revisions as well. Conan was always conceived with Schwarzenegger in mind, but James Earl Jones, not Sean Connery, will portray Thulsadoom, the movie's sorcerer villain. Sandahl Bergman—a dancer in ALL THAT JAZZ, and subject of a recent Esquire cover story

about women's muscles—will play the heroine Valeria, not Raquel Welch. Jerry Lopez ("a world famous surfer," said a Milius source) will play the third heroic lead.

The film's challenging visuals are being coordinated by Ron Cobb, who designed spacecraft interiors for ALIEN. Though details are unclear, it is said the film will not contain stop-motion animation, despite the reported involvement of animator Jim Danforth at one stage.

Schwarzenegger, who has been working for the past year with "weapons and swordplay and things like that," has seen some of the creatures built for the film—notably a monstrous serpent, which he said is "operated hydraulically." Could it be—the mind reels—that awful day-glo atrocity from a past De Laurentiis epic, KING KONG? Schwarzenegger isn't sure, but he doesn't think so; as far as he knows, everything has been built expressly for CONAN, designed in England by "the guy who won an Academy Award for the special effects in ALIEN." [Presumably, Schwarzenegger is referring to Carlo Rambaldi, two-time Oscar winner for his full-scale mechanical models in ALIEN and KING KONG, though a Milius source would not confirm Rambaldi's involvement.]

Despite Schwarzenegger's body-building background, he and Milius are adamant that CONAN not be perceived as "a muscle picture."

"Conan battles snakes, lizards, ape-like things, mutants and monsters," said Schwarzenegger. "But the movie will be realistic, totally unlike HERCULES, where you have a guy throwing boulders and knocking down buildings. We have scenes in a snow-covered land where he's wearing fur clothing, and we keep him clothed like that to avoid the muscle picture comparison. Milius is terrified of the film being compared to HERCULES."

Schwarzenegger isn't terrified—but he is genuinely concerned—about regressing at this stage of his burgeoning acting career. From Bob Rafelson's 1975 STAY HUNGRY (an impressive, little-seen feature) to a telefilm like THE JAYNE MANSFIELD STORY, he is the only body-builder to enter the acting field and deliver credible performances. If Conan looked like a grunt-and-groan spectacle, Schwarzenegger said he'd avoid it like the plague.

"Conan will be as he was in the books," he asserted, "but he'll be vulnerable. He won't just be a barbarian who wakes up and kills the first thing in his path. The film is loaded with violence and action. Yet sad things happen, as when Valeria is killed, and Conan has to react to that. He feels it, of course, but he's a Cimmerian, and he's got to conceal that part of him. That's pretty complex, and I've got to get that across." □





Book jacket art for "The Experiment."

## THE EXPERIMENT: WHEN IS A MAN MORE LIKE A FISH?

"I'm a new form of man, one that scientists, philosophers, and the writers of myth have speculated on since the dawn of mankind," explains 35-year-old Harry Styles to a group of politicians and oil executives. "In this age of technology I was an inevitability."

Harry Styles—married, with a wife and three children—is no longer a man. In Richard Setlowe's new book, *The Experiment* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), Styles is the recipient, perhaps the victim, of an experimental technique that replaces his cancer-ridden lungs with artificial gills, leav-

ing him healthy but submerged in a tank of water, irreversibly isolated from his fellow man.

MGM has announced its intention to bring Setlowe's riveting novel to the screen. Backed by producer Herb Jaffe, who produced *MOTEL HELL*, *DEMON SEED* and *TIME AFTER TIME*, Setlowe will write the screenplay himself. *THE EXPERIMENT*, still without an announced cast or director, is scheduled to go before the cameras in the spring of 1981. No firm release date has been set.

Setlowe's novel is a spellbinder devoid of the mad scientist/monster

syndrome of the pulps. His extensive research provides a convincing narrative of the biological and emotional effects such an implant would have. The book is a human tragedy where decent men are destroyed by their good intentions, and corporate and government bureaucrats scheme to manipulate and subvert the goals of the project.

However, the book is less occupied with action and suspense than with psychological and philosophical issues, and it will be interesting to see how Setlowe, in his screenwriting debut, bridges the gap. **Dan Scapperotti.**

## THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN

*A classic film undergoes a comedic sex change at Universal Studios*

By Kyle Counts

"The Incredible Shrinking Script" might be a good alternate title for Lily Tomlin's Universal vehicle *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN*, slated for February release. Budget pressures forced executive producer and author Jane Wagner to miniaturize the scale of the script from a \$30 million epic to a simpler, "more humanistic" tale.

Tomlin stars as Pat Kramer—suburban housewife, loving mother and good neighbor—whose comfortable world expands to monstrous proportions when she mysteriously begins to shrink. Universal is quick to point out that the film is not a ripoff of Jack Arnold's 1957 classic, *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, but rather a new version "suggested by Richard Matheson's novel."

"I marvel at what Jack Arnold did," said Wagner, a long-time Tomlin associate, "but I didn't want to copy it. It had a very melodramatic style, and I wanted mine to be absurdist, a modern fairy tale about the dangers of futuristic chemistry."

Wagner's first script, which she calls "a science fiction epic," found its way into the hands of ANIMAL

HOUSE director John Landis, who quickly agreed to helm the project. The last half of this draft made extensive—and expensive—use of visual effects. When the proposed budget hit the \$30 million mark, Universal balked: Wagner was told to pare her screenplay down.

"It was a wonderful script," Wagner said of the first version, "with the potential pop appeal to be a great commercial success. But it was an expensive script. Having produced before, I had to see the practical side of things." When it became apparent that a rewrite was imminent, Landis bowed out, as did *STAR WARS*' Rob Balack, who had been designing effects footage for the film's spectacular second half. Landis went on to direct *THE BLUES BROTHERS*, ironically a film which ended up costing Universal as much as *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN*'s first version would have.

Universal head Ned Tanen encouraged Wagner to re-think—and re-write—the film as a simpler, down-to-earth fantasy. The result was a script that cost \$10 million less to film, and a story that was, in Wagner's words, "more humanistic. The more I concentrated on the Pat Kramer

character, the more universal in scope it seemed to become. In some ways, when you simplify, you get better."

Several directors were considered to replace Landis, but the studio finally decided upon Joel Schumacher, a former designer with television experience who had written the script for *THE WIZ*. The final draft focuses on Pat Kramer's home town of Tasty Meadows, in California's San Fernando Valley. In Arnold's *INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, a mysterious radioactive cloud causes hero Scott Carey to get small; in the upcoming film, a combination of everyday household products triggers Tomlin's shrinking syndrome.

When word of her shrinkage becomes public, two scientists at the "Kleinman Institute for the Study of Unexplained Phenomena" (Henry Gibson and Elizabeth Wilson) kidnap Kramer in hopes of duplicating the phenomena and using it against "unruly feminists and boat people." Imprisoned in a gerbil cage at the Institute, Pat is befriended by a gorilla named Sidney (Rick Baker) who ultimately helps her escape. A comic chase ensues, and Pat, long thought to have been ground up in the family garbage disposal, returns to a stunned community of friends and relatives.

In the rushes, Baker's gorilla looked so convincing that some studio executives were convinced that Sidney was *real*. Baker has almost made a career out of portraying apes (best known for *KING KONG*), and Sidney is said to be his most complex suit—50 pounds of control cables, foam rubber and hair—as well as a *tour de force* performance.

Special effects men Roy Arbogast (*CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND*, *CAVEMAN*) and Dave Kelsey have put together a number of clever set pieces, including a giant toy robot, a nine-foot electric griddle with plastic eggs and bacon and a champagne bottle weighing 500 pounds. Props were built up to 24



Lily Tomlin in the 48-foot tall kitchen set. Each ball on the curtain measures 33 inches around, and weighs 2.5 pounds.

times normal size, including a towering kitchen set the height of a four-story building.

In addition, cinematographer Bruce Logan, an effects cameraman on *STAR WARS*, has engineered a number of high-quality process shots. Introvision, a complex and time-consuming split beam front projection system, was also used in a handful of scenes to reduce the number of enlarged props required.

While Wagner did not go out of her way to attach a feminist perspective to the film, she is obviously pleased that the movie provides a heroine in a genre almost completely male-dominated. "From the beginning, the character of Pat Kramer represented to me a new kind of Peter Pan," she says. "She is the classic victim, thrown into an exaggerated situation and going on a fantastic journey. She eventually proves to herself—and to the world, I guess—that her size doesn't prevent her from accomplishing great things. In that sense, she represents every woman." □

Pat Kramer (Lily Tomlin) and Sydney (credited as Richard A. Baker) share a congratulatory hug in the final moments of *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN*.



# CHUD

Look out world, here comes Andrew Bonime and his cast of subterranean sewer mutants

By Jordan R. Fox

Of a number of independent film companies coming to prominence in recent years, perhaps only one—that of Ed Pressman [10:4:17]—has had a consistently strong involvement in interesting genre projects. That situation may change with the arrival of a new company on the scene, New York-based Andrew Bonime, Ltd. Bonime, a former film packager (THE HARRAD EXPERIMENT) and co-producer of THE BELL JAR, has at least three genre films on his drawing board: CHUD, THE CHILD BUYER and THE STAR-CROSSED. Reportedly backed by Wall Street investment funds, Bonime boasted that he intends to film CHUD in January, with or without major studio participation.

Bonime called CHUD, "an urban terror piece with science-fictional elements," though at first glance it seems little more than a vintage 1950s monster movie. According to Bonime, Sheppard Abbey's script was derived from news accounts of derelicts inhabiting the vast network of abandoned service tunnels under New York City and rumors that nuclear waste was being stored in caverns beneath the city. Bonime claimed production research done for the film reveals large quantities of material are being stored underground: toxic chemicals that have no known method of disposal and waste from D.N.A. research. Derelicts plus chemicals plus D.N.A. sludge—the mutagenic possibilities are endless. As the film

opens, the new life form created by this mix is coming up to feed off the surface population.

What makes this any different from schlock horror like HUMANOIDS FROM THE DEEP or SCARED TO DEATH? Besides its \$4 million budget, Bonime said CHUD will have a "people director" and a script that accentuates character and realism. "I did not hire a horror movie director," said Bonime, who chose Richard Compton (best known for the sleeper MACONCOUNTYLINE) for the assignment. "I felt that the elements of horror, while not easy to do, are techniques that can be learned. What can't be learned is an ability to work with the actors to make a strong human story."

CHUD will be shot entirely on New York locations, with some of the filming taking place in the actual tunnels of New York. "There are these incredible tunnels that look like something out of STAR WARS," said Bonime. "We also found these places—underground stations to abandoned factories—that were built in the 1800s. It's going to look spectacular, but it will be excruciatingly difficult to shoot down there."

Despite the current boom in low-budget horror films, Bonime feels it will be a tough job to sell CHUD to audiences. "It's easy to sell a knife-wielding maniac," he explained, "because you're dealing with reality. No matter how badly done, the premise can be bought. But if you tell someone, 'There's a monster coming at you,' they know it isn't true. To get



Andrew Bonime

that suspension of disbelief, your design has to be so on the nose."

Design of the mutants for CHUD is reportedly the first feature assignment of a company noted for its elaborate effects work in commercials. Bonime won't name the company, however, because he's concerned details of the design will leak out.

Bonime is obviously optimistic about the chances for CHUD, looking down the road at future projects. Next in line, he said, is a film of John Hersey's *The Child Buyer*, which has been previously optioned but unfilmed. The story revolves around gifted children who are "cultivated" through surgery, drugs and conditioning into pure thinking machines. The children are hooked into a giant super-computer to help solve the problems of mankind.

Eight years after buying the rights, Bonime said the legal problems hanging over the project have been resolved. Bonime has a script by Lee Minoff (a former assistant to Stanley Kubrick who co-wrote *YELLOW SUBMARINE*), and is currently searching for a "name" director. Bonime said the project would have a \$5 million budget.

THE STAR-CROSSED is an ambitious long-term project, budgeted in the \$20-\$30 million range. Written by Parnell Hall, Bonime said it's a love story set against the vastness of time and space. Seen as just one part of a trilogy, Bonime is trying to gain attention to the material by publishing Hall's novel as a lavishly illustrated coffee-table book. Bonime owns another genre property, John and Anthony Gentile's *The Thirty*, an "apocalyptic thriller" which will also appear first as a novel.

"I've never considered myself a science fiction or horror buff," Bonime said, "but there's a lot of good material in the genre that hasn't been done because the industry believes in cycles. If a cycle is in, the only thing they think of is if the cycle is going to be over by the time you finish the film. As an independent, it takes me a long time to get something made, so I can't get into a project because it's a hot genre. I have to like it a lot." □

# THE WOLFEN

Smart, big bad wolves invade the Big Apple

After delays caused by the recent Screen Actors' Guild strike, production has been completed for Michael Wadleigh's THE WOLFEN [10:3:21], the story of super-intelligent wolves that prey on the urban poor. The film, produced by Alan King and Rupert Hitzig, was shot completely in New York City. Although numerous complications sent the budget soaring to \$15 million, Orion Pictures' June 1981 release date is still intact.

Principal photography wrapped back in April, with British cameraman Gerry Fisher going most of the lensing, but complex second-unit work in burned out areas of New York's South Bronx neighborhood was only recently finished. THE WOLFEN's interiors were shot at the Astoria Studios in Queens, one of the oldest and least used studios in the country; this is only the second major feature (besides THE WIZ) to be shot in Astoria in a generation.

Real wolves have been used at the studio and on locations. In addition, special mechanical effects have been created by Eoin Sprott, who supervised the construction of fantasy props for THE WIZ. Sprott was also called upon to create the grisly remains of the wolves' victims. Carl Fullerton, who recently worked with Dick Smith on ALTERED STATES, devised the bloody makeup effects.

Plans are underway for other genre films to be filmed in Astoria in 1981, and city leaders are planning a \$10 million renovation of the facility. "Working in New York has its problems built in," said Hitzig. "But the excitement of the city really comes across. The reality of the extras and the actors' faces makes THE WOLFEN a different kind of film than the kind we get in Los Angeles."

Hitzig added that if modern studio space is made accessible, New York could become a second Hollywood. "People want to get out of Los Angeles," he said. "They think their brains atrophy after a while."

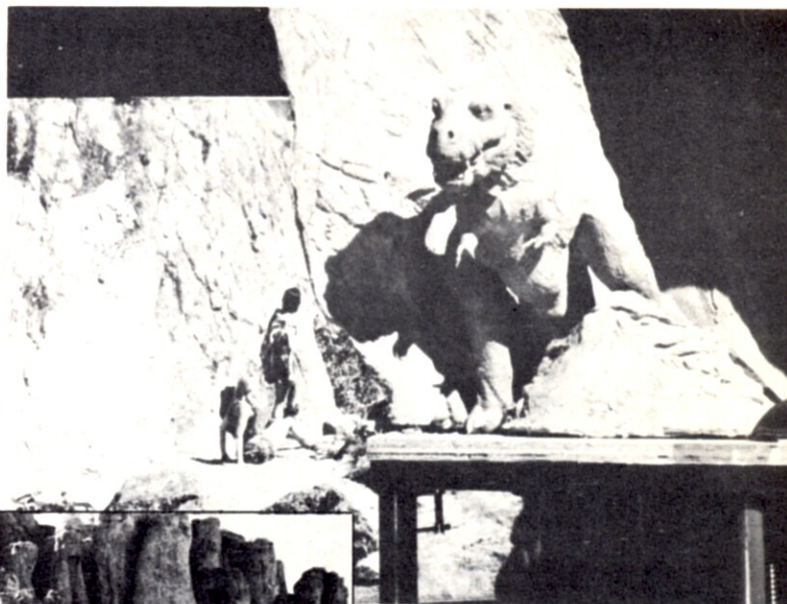
Paul Mandell

Eoin Sprott's WOLFEN handiwork.



Publicity artwork for CHUD, Bonime's initial project for filming.





Top left: David Allen works on an animation set-up for *CAVEMAN*. Top Right: a composite of miniature and rear-projection elements; a matte painting will be added later. Bottom: high-resolution VistaVision format and strong, directional lighting create an almost perfect blend of model, live-action and background plate.

## CAVEMAN

*A not-so-funny thing happened on the way to animating this stone-age comedy*

By Paul M. Sammon

Apparently upset with producer interference and frustrated with difficulties in establishing his Los Angeles effects studio, Jim Danforth has walked out on the Larry Turman/David Foster production of *CAVEMAN*, for which he had been supervising postproduction animation effects. David Allen, whom Danforth hired as an assistant, has taken over responsibility for the approximately eight minutes of animation required by the script.

Danforth, however, will not be idle, having accepted an offer from Ray Harryhausen to help with the remaining animation for *CLASH OF THE TITANS* [10:3:39]. The offer from Harryhausen was reportedly a standing one, and Danforth wasted little time before leaving for Harryhausen's London studio in mid-October.

Danforth's departure from the \$5 million *CAVEMAN* project took most observers by surprise: he had reportedly turned down Harryhausen's overtures in the past, and his studio, Effects Associates (which was bankrolled by Turman/Foster), had just begun producing quality animation footage when he announced his resignation.

"One of the reasons Jim quit was because he'd been promised a much freer hand in directing the animated sequences," explained David Allen, who will continue to work out of Danforth's studio. "Jim was also somewhat of a victim of circumstance. There was a problem with the suppliers of certain camera and elec-

tronic equipment, for example, which was either not delivered on time or was delivered but wasn't up to our specifications." Danforth may have simply grown weary of the troublesome details of building a new studio and joined Harryhausen's crew, where administrative worries would not rest on his shoulders.

Originally, Danforth turned down the effects work for *CAVEMAN*, but changed his mind while the producers were out talking with other animators, including Allen. "Before anything firm happened with the other offers, Jim changed his mind," Allen said. "Since he has such a good reputation as a technician and an artist, the producers and director were happy to have him accept."

Danforth's reputation as an innovative artist is well deserved. But so is his reputation as a *temperamental* artist. "I don't think Jim would argue that he has had some problems with interpersonal relationships," said Allen. "Jim gets some criticism for being uncompromising, of putting his own ideals ahead of the producer's. I guess if Jim were directing *STAR WARS*, that sort of vision would be appropriate and appreciated."

Danforth has had problems with producers before, his abortive *TIME-*

*GATE* project for producer Melvin Simon for example, on which he was to make his directorial debut. After \$500,000 of development, the project collapsed over a dispute between Danforth and line producer James Broderick.

*CAVEMAN*'s postproduction schedule should not be seriously affected by Danforth's absence, although time and money were tight to begin with. That's because during the five months Danforth was on the project, starting from May, 1980, he outfitted Effects Associates with some of the best equipment available. Danforth chose to use the 8-perf VistaVision format resurrected by George Lucas' ILM facility, which enables the filmmaker to work with a much larger image area than with the standard 4-perf format, reducing optical problems such as graininess. "Harryhausen experimented with this format in the 1960s," Allen noted, "but he finally rejected it at that time for being too costly and too difficult to work with."

Effects Associates also utilizes three VistaVision process projectors specially made to Danforth's specifications. When incorporating background plates and live-action footage with the stop-motion puppets, this

equipment allows the animators to project images without having to enlarge them as much. Such critical control produces crisp images and almost non-existent grain in the final composite. Optically, the results are even better than Harryhausen's current work.

Work is progressing under Allen and the remaining animation team: Randy Cook, Peter Kleinow, Jim Aupperle (*PLANET OF DINOSAURS*) and David Stipes. Danforth reportedly began animating one sequence and started two matte paintings, but it's not clear if any of his work will make it into the final cut.

Rocco Gioffre (who assisted on the matte paintings for *STAR TREK-TMP*), Dan Currey and Jena Holman are handling matte painting chores, matching exteriors filmed in Durango, Mexico. Other effects personnel include Roy Arbogast, a veteran of *JAWS* and *CE3K*, who is handling full-scale dinosaur sections and a huge fried egg. Chris Walas, who was between assignments on *SCANNERS* and *DRAGONSLAYER*, contributed an effective Neanderthal costume.

Unlike most dinosaur footage, *CAVEMAN*'s three dinosaurs are played strictly for laughs. "They're almost like the Coyote in the Road Runner cartoons," said Allen. "Except for the opening sequence, where a caveman is carried off to his death by a lizard—which seemed a bit odd in tone to me considering the rest of the film—the dinosaurs never seem to kill anybody. They're just not that fearsome."

But that doesn't stop the cast of *CAVEMAN*—Ringo Starr, Barbara Bach and Randy Quaid—from running away everytime one of the dinosaurs pops up, and running into a series of comic situations, written by long-time Mel Brooks associate Rudy De Lucca. Former screenwriter Carl Gottlieb (*THE JERK*) will make his directorial debut with the film, which is set for release by United Artists in April, 1981. □

# SUPERMAN II

*More expensive than a speeding locomotive, but you still won't believe a man can fly*

By Michael Kaplan

After six years, five screenwriters, three directors, two composers, numerous lawsuits and a budget reported to be nearly \$110 million, SUPERMAN II is finally in the can and set for a June 1981 release.

The massive production has actually been completed for several months, however, Warner Bros. executives decided to pass up lucrative Christmas bookings for a traditionally *more* lucrative summer release. With an unprecedented investment to worry about, Warner Bros. is surely aware that the top three hits of all time—STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and JAWS—are all recent summer films.

The original intention was to shoot SUPERMAN and most of SUPERMAN II at the same time, and the \$55 million price tag seemed reasonable for two large-scale special effects productions. But three months after SUPERMAN's release, executive producer Ilya Salkind fired director Richard Donner and replaced him with Guy Hamilton, whom Donner had replaced on the project two years earlier. Hamilton's tenure was short-lived ("He was there for a while, but he never ended up shooting," said effects director Colin Chilvers), and he was replaced by Richard Lester, who had been called in during SUPERMAN to act as a buffer between Donner and producer Pierre Spengler. Lester actually had replaced Spengler as producer before stepping in as director himself. The result of all these personnel shifts was the apparent scrapping of most of Richard Donner's footage.

In an interview conducted shortly

after SUPERMAN's release [8:4:13], Donner said he had already completed about 80 percent of the footage for the sequel. "There's not a whole lot left to do on it," he told us then, "but what's left could take months." But as directors came and went, and more and more scenes were scrapped and reshot, the months dragged on and the bill rolled up. By the time shooting finally ended, very little of Donner's footage remained, and Lester was credited as sole director. "Donner only shot about one-third of the film," a Warner Bros. spokesman said, "but most of that had to be reshot."

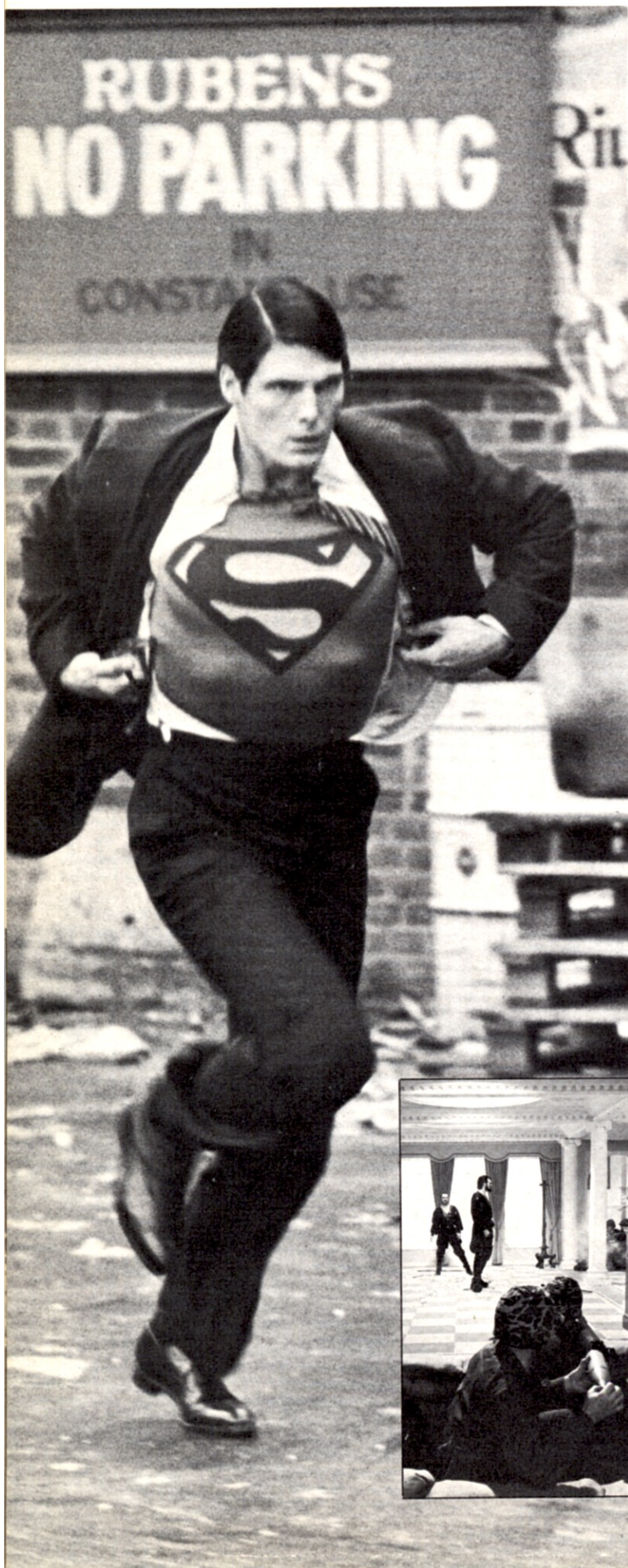
Oddly, the late Geoffrey Unsworth retains his credit as cinematographer, although all his work was done for Donner. Bob Paynter is given a secondary credit as director of photography.

But audiences probably won't notice the change in director and cinematographer. What they *will* notice, however, are major changes in characters, plot and theme. This is more than just the second half of a long movie; SUPERMAN II is more serious, more mature and more romantic than its predecessor.

Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder and Gene Hackman all return in their familiar roles as Superman, Lois Lane and Lex Luthor, but several other characters from SUPERMAN are conspicuously absent for most of the film. Hackman's henchmen Otis (Ned Beatty) and Miss Teschmacher (Valerie Perrine), and Jimmy Olsen (Marc McClure) are all but written out of the script moments after they are reintroduced, taking with them most of SUPERMAN's low-brow camp elements.

Marlon Brando, who was report-

**Scenes from SUPERMAN II.** Left: The Man of Steel (Christopher Reeve) strips for action in New York. Below Left: Kryptonian super-criminals Zod (Terence Stamp, left) and Non (Jack O'Halloran) come calling on the President and are greeted by White House security forces. Below Center: Non and Ursa (Sarah Douglas) prepare to toss a bus at Superman in the film's climactic battle in New York City. Below Right: Superman saves a child from drowning at Niagra Falls.





edly paid \$3.7 million for his work on the two films, is missing altogether, and crucial scenes involving Superman's father have been clumsily rewritten for his mother, played by Susannah York. Brando is even missing from the prologue; unidentified hands place baby Kal-El in the crystal spaceship, and only the projected images of the Elders sentence the three Kryptonian criminals to the "Phantom Zone."

Lightened by the absence of Brando, Beatty, Perrine and McClure, *SUPERMAN II* concentrates on the romance between Reeve and Kidder and the often grim large-scale action sequences. When Superman saves the Eiffel Tower from terrorists by hurling an atomic bomb into outer space, the concussion shatters the bonds of the "Phantom Zone," releasing what are now three *super-criminals*. Landing first on the Moon, they toyingly kill three astronauts (in what's said to be the film's finest sequence—in terms of both effect and special effects), find their way to Earth and bust up a couple of Southern towns before heading for the Oval Office where they take power.

Superman, meanwhile, reveals his identity to Lois Lane, has PG sex with her, gives up his powers for mortal love, gets beaten up in a roadhouse brawl, gives up mortal love to regain his power and save the world, and finally confronts the three villains in a spectacular battle over, through and on the streets of Metropolis.

According to one source who attended a screening several months ago, the quality of the film's effects are generally high, with the exception of several bad blue-screen shots. However, touted improvements in the optical system that made Superman fly resulted in quicker camera set-ups, not better flying scenes; you probably still won't believe a man (or three super-villains) can fly.

With *SUPERMAN* grossing well over \$100 million worldwide, and advance reports on *SUPERMAN II* predicting a strong box-office performance next summer, preproduction work is already underway on *SUPERMAN III*. And why not? It is, after all, the American Way. □



Stephen King (left), Richard Rubinstein and George Romero chat on the set of Romero's non-genre *KNIGHTRIDERS*.

## STEPHEN KING

*Catching up with the rapidly-rising star of author Stephen King: thoughts on books, films and what went wrong on THE SHINING*

By Paul R. Gagne

When Stanley Kubrick's *THE SHINING* was released last May, it ended three years of anticipation and dread for fans of Stephen King's terrifying novel. Anticipation, because Kubrick is, well, Kubrick. And dread, because of rumors Kubrick had drastically altered the flow of King's book. The fans were right on both counts. Unfortunately, the film didn't *scare* anybody.

So now it's back to waiting for the next film adaptation of King's material, and there is plenty to wait for. By latest count, movies based on *The Stand*, *The Dead Zone* and several stories from King's *Night Shift* anthology are all in the works. In addition, King is collaborating with George Romero on an original horror screenplay, *CREEP SHOW*. And the rights to King's newest Viking novel, *Firestarter*, were bought even before the book was published. If all the announced Stephen King projects materialize, the soft-spoken author from Maine will be the dominant force in horror films through the 1980s.

*Firestarter*, King's latest novel, concerns a young girl with pyrokinetic abilities: she can light a fire simply by thinking about it. Her talent stems from a genetic imbalance caused when her parents participated in what they thought was a college experiment with a mild hallucinogen. But the experiments were actually sponsored by a secret government agency and the drug was designed to increase psychic output.

Now the agency wants to put the child to use.

The book bears some similarities to John Farris' *The Fury*, but King said the story was actually half written before *The Fury* came out. "This field is so damned narrow," King explained, "that you're always on somebody's feet."

According to King, the story grew out of actual recorded instances of pyrokinesis, a phenomena also known as spontaneous combustion. "There are cases on record of people who burned up under mysterious circumstances," King said. "The fires would be very hot, but at the same time they wouldn't spread. There would be nothing left but ashes afterwards. I got playing with the idea and then I thought, 'What if somebody had this power and they could control it!'"

The rights to *Firestarter* were snapped up for \$1 million by Egyptian film producer Dodi Fayad, who plans to make the film through Allied Stars, a company based in England. King said their current plans, "sound so *sane* to me that I have serious doubts what they're up to! They were going to hire a screenwriter and get a screenplay before they hired the rest of the production staff. So as far as I know, that's what's going on: a search for talent."

With *Firestarter*, *The Dead Zone* and *The Stand*, King seems to have abandoned the gut-wrenching horror of his earlier works for a more philosophical, socially conscious approach to the genre. But King is in top horror form with his recent short sto-

ries. For instance, in "The Mist"—a story from *Dark Forces*, an anthology edited by King's agent Kirby McCauley—a weird mist acts as a conduit from another dimension, bringing huge monsters to a small town in Maine. Although an adaptation is only in the embryonic stage, the story was originally written with a film treatment in mind. "You're supposed to visualize that story in grainy black and white," King said. "It's a kind of *homage* to Roger Corman and Bert I. Gordon, the heroes of my misspent youth."

"The Crate," a story originally published in the July, 1979 issue of *Gallery*, has found its way into King's screenplay for *CREEP SHOW*, the first of two projects with director George Romero and producer Richard Rubinstein. The story of a janitor who discovers a 150-year-old crate—and the hungry being inside—is the only story in the *CREEP SHOW* anthology to be previously published, King said.

*CREEP SHOW* [9:3 9:4:78] is now scheduled to begin filming in early 1981, with a possible release late that year. The hope is to make it so successful that King, Romero and Rubinstein have enough clout with the major studios to film *THE STAND* the way they want it done. King has already completed a first draft of the screenplay, but many problems in adapting the epic novel still lay ahead. "The script is only half as long as the book, or about 400 pages, but that still adds up to five or six hours,"

continued on page 10



## MUPPET MOVIE II: PILFERING PIG

Production continues with some delays on Associated Film's MUPPET MOVIE II, currently slated for summer 1981 release. In the film, Miss Piggy stands accused of stealing the so-called "Baseball Diamond" (Who, moi?), forcing Kermit, Fozzie and company to play detective to clear her. Diana Rigg and Charles Grodin are among the cameo performances. The script, by a variety of writers, is said to be loaded with punnish humor.

According to a Muppet source, shooting in London was held up for a time because of problems with a scene in which Miss Piggy dives into water and surfaces. Not surprisingly, the muppet gets very sodden in the process.

One possible solution: hiring a

midget to do the scene, an admittedly prosaic solution for Henson Associates, which more often relies on sophisticated opticals and mechanical effects for the film's action sequences. In fact, the technology of operating the Muppets is now heading towards the use of waldoes—mechanical limbs that mimic the movements of a remote operator.

Miss Piggy & Co. will be taking a well-deserved break after MUPPET MOVIE II is wrapped. The next feature from Henson Associates, Brian Froud's THE DARK CRYSTAL, is planned as a somewhat more serious fantasy film, without the "stars" of the Muppets' TV show, which has ceased production after five successful seasons.

Judith P. Harris

## I GO POGO

We've met the enemy—they's distributors!

By Dan Scapperotti

It could have been the perfect film in the perfect place at the perfect time. For what better to capitalize on election fever than I GO POGO [10:2:10], the story of the most reluctant presidential candidate ever: Pogo Possum of Okefenokee Swamp.

At least that was the thinking of Virginia-based producers Marc Chinoy and Kerry Stowell, who began work on the \$2 million puppet animation feature in August, 1979. Based on Walt Kelley's famous allegorical cartoon strip, the film was supposed to open three months before the election, backed by a \$1 million promotion budget and a national "Pogo for President" write-in campaign.

But New York-based distributor 21st Century Communications could only manage to play the feature on videocassette through Fotomat outlets; the expected feature bookings never materialized. But Chinoy and Stowell have recovered the film and are making plans to distribute it themselves—which is fortunate, for the film is much too interesting to die such a lonely death.

I GO POGO was photographed using Chinoy's "Flexiform" process, which combines conventional puppet animation with the more remarkable techniques of "replacement animation," made famous by George Pal's "Puppetoons" in the '30s and '40s. Replacement animation is the three-dimensional equivalent of cartoon animation, using a different model for each frame of film. The technique permits the animation model to change its shape as well as its position from frame to frame, allowing fluid, exaggerated movements, as well as the limitless versatility that distinguishes the animation medium from live action photography.

I GO POGO uses replacement animation primarily for repetitive movement, utilizing a unique system of models with interchangeable parts. To make a character walk, animators (generally art students and amateur filmmakers) simply use 16 rigid, pre-molded models for the lower half of the body—a prefabricated gait—while manipulating the arms and face conventionally. The result is startling puppet animation.

But will the film ever be seen? The producers are trying to interest a European distributor, and there is interest from some television executives. But I GO POGO is best appreciated on the big screen, and, sparked by exhibitor interest, may open in New York as a Christmas attraction.

Pogo



## STEPHEN KING

continued from page 9

King said. "They'd have to issue a catheter when you went into the movie if you didn't want to miss any of it!"

One plan under discussion is to make two films from the book, concentrating on the superflu and the final confrontation with the Dark Man. "Romero and Rubinstein want to do the book as much as possible," King said. "There comes a point, I think, where you stop cutting fat and you get into the meat. Then, you're committing yourself to making changes that twist the book into something that it really isn't, which is what happened to SALEM'S LOT on television."

Other long-announced King projects have had trouble getting off the ground. THE DEAD ZONE is still waiting for an acceptable screenplay, King told us. Paul Monash, who adapted SALEM'S LOT for television, is off the project after completing two drafts. "Neither of the drafts was particularly successful in my opinion or in the opinion of producer Sidney Pollack," King said. "Pollack's feeling was that he wanted to do something closer to the book. I was relieved." Jeffrey Boam, who co-authored STRAIGHT TIME for Dustin Hoffman, has been hired to write a third script, working closely with director Stanley Donen, whose last genre product was the disappointing SATURN 3.

CHILDREN OF THE CORN [10:1:34] is another project on hold. Based on one of the stories in King's Night Shift anthology, the film was set to begin shooting this summer from King's own screenplay, but was abandoned at the last minute by 20th Century Fox. Director Harry Wiland was left holding a \$750,000 check from Home Box Office, leaving him more than \$2 million short of the anticipated budget. According to King, Wiland is attempting to garner enough additional financing to shoot the film next summer when corn season rolls around.

Other Night Shift stories are also in the latter stages of preproduction. The NIGHT SHIFT project that was scrapped by NBC (including "Battleground," and "I Know What You Need") is now owned jointly by Martin Poll Productions and The Production Company, which are preparing them for theatrical release; a project based on "Strawberry Spring" and "Jerusalem's Lot" is reportedly set to go before cameras in the late spring. Lee Reynolds has apparently done some work in adapting King's original NBC scripts, and will share the screenwriting credits.

Producer Milton Subotsky may soon begin production on the first of his two NIGHT SHIFT trilogies, both scripted by Edward and Valerie Abraham. One trilogy involves three of King's "machine" stories, "The Lawnmower Man," "The Mangler" and "Trucks." The other trilogy involves three revenge stories, "Quitters, Inc.," "The Ledge" and "Sometimes They Come Back."

King has often been cool towards adaptations of his work, including Kubrick's handling of THE SHINING. King's feelings about the film, "cancel out to zero," he said. While applauding the photography, Kubrick's execution and the use of the hedge maze as a metaphor for the Torrence family, King said that THE SHINING ultimately, "comes off looking like a technicolor TWILIGHT ZONE," he said. "You almost expect to see Rod Serling out by the hedge maze: 'Jack and Wendy Torrence, your next stop is... The Twilight Zone.'"

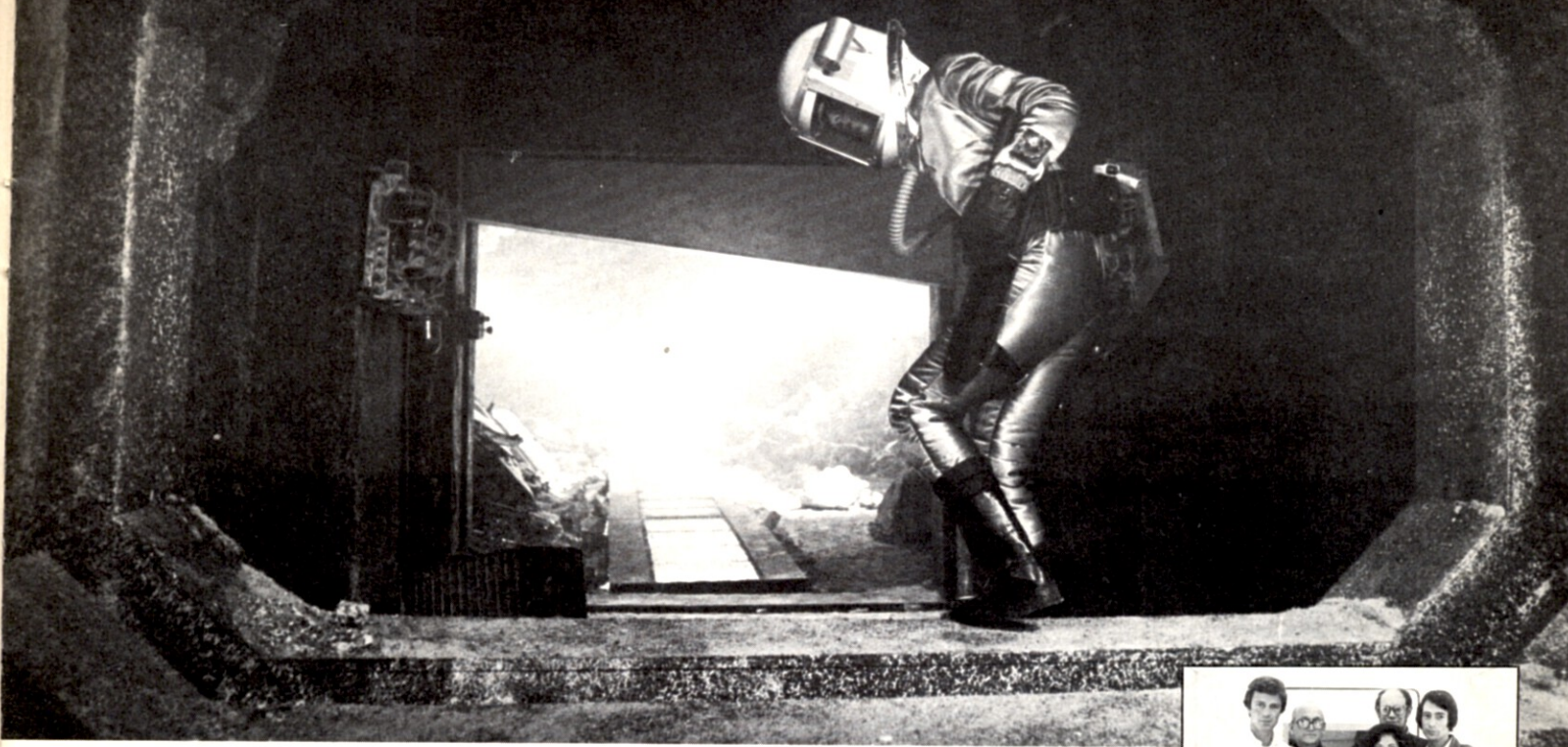
"The problems with the film are mostly problems with scripting," King added. "There are script weaknesses, places where Kubrick and Diane Johnson apparently didn't think—or maybe they thought too much. Kubrick knew exactly where all the scares should go and where all the payoffs should come. It seems as though he simply said, 'This is too easy. I'm not going to do it that way.' So he didn't, and what he got was very little. Horror works best when you hit people with it and don't let up. When you get to the point where they say, 'Why doesn't it stop?' you go on for another 15 minutes!"

Reportedly, Kubrick would not read King's own screenplay for THE SHINING because he did not want to be influenced by another view of the book. But what was King's screenplay like? "It only followed the book about as much as Kubrick's and Johnson's screenplay," he said. "It was pegged a lot more to the history of the hotel because I was really interested in the idea that an evil place calls evil men—which is a line from 'Salem's Lot.' The screenplay that I wrote begins with total blackness on screen and the sounds of people talking. It turns out that these are Mafia hit men, and there are shotgun flashes and screams. Then this voice says, 'And get his balls.' There's another scream, then you see the hotel. The story follows from there, except I didn't bother with the home life in Boulder or the job interview."

But would King's screenplay have resulted in a more frightening film? "I don't know," he answered. "You would have to see the film produced to judge that. It was a workable screenplay, I think."

Besides the various film deals and screenplays, what else is King up to? Two new novels, *Cujo* and *It* are in the works, and his long-awaited *Danse Macabre*, a look at horror in American media over the past 25 years, is due for publication in March. "The Mist" and three non-horror novellas will be put together in *Different Seasons*, and a second *Night Shift*-type volume of short stories can be expected at some point. And one group of short stories that has been running in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* is projected to spread out over 12 years, eventually forming an epic novel!

"I don't even write a lot," King claimed. "I just sort of write every day and keep it rolling along, so the material piles up." □



## INSEMINOID

*No one seems concerned that it's just a rip-off of ALIEN. Why not? "Audiences will go anyway," explains producer Richard Gordon.*

**By Mike Childs & Alan Jones**

"Reviews don't matter with a film like INSEMINOID." The \$2 million shocker was barely out of production, and producer Richard Gordon was already anticipating its critics. "Audiences will go anyway," he said, "attributing the bad notices to intellectual critics who aren't in tune with current tastes."

Those "bad notices," if they come, will probably be targeted at INSEMINOID's story, the first effort for make-up artist Nick Maley and his wife, actress Gloria Maley. A researcher on a distant planet is raped in her sleep by an unearthly creature. Eight hours later the researcher (Judy Geeson) gives birth to alien twins and begins to mutate herself. Her nascent maternal instincts incite her to kill the other members of the expedition one by one. Comparisons to ALIEN, and many other films, are obvious.

The Maleys wrote the script in four days, after director Norman J. Warren told them he had backers but needed a screenplay. "There are really only a half dozen original storylines anyway, so I don't think we have pinched the plot from anywhere," said Nick Maley, whose recent makeup credits include SUPERMAN and A BRIDGE TOO FAR. "I think it would be more correct to say that our story is a combination of all those original themes."

The film, scheduled for release in February, is the first British film to be financed by Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers, known for their seemingly

endless series of Kung Fu films. INSEMINOID is unashamedly exploitative, using chainsaws and flame throwers for two of the murders, and showing the baby aliens eating the flesh from a victim's neck and ripping intestines out of another victim.

"We have been in the industry long enough to know what grabs an audience and what doesn't," Gloria Maley said. "When we put our heads together, we only then realized how evil our imaginations were."

"Things have changed a great deal since the '50s," explained Gordon, who produced two Boris Karloff films in that decade—CORRIDORS OF BLOOD and THE HAUNTED STRANGLER. "There is now this need to be far more explicit, the inevitable conclusion after what the Hammer films started—they set a new standard. People are not so much going to see horror films to be frightened—they are going to test the limits of their endurance."

The film was shot on a tight four-week schedule, much of which was spent in Chiselhurst Caves, a tourist attraction in Kent, England, where a space station set was constructed at a fraction of studio sound stage costs. "Originally the story was set on a spaceship," Gloria Maley said, "but we changed that so we wouldn't get involved in any elaborate special effects."

The caves, however, posed some unusual technical problems. "Our production manager knew of them and suggested we use them," said

Warren. "The production value you get on the screen is incredible—you can't beat it—but it is the most unpleasant place to work it. It's cold and damp and, as the floors are uneven, moving lamps and the camera became a real problem. We had 1.5 miles of electrical cable to be rerouted each time."

Scriptwriter Maley served as a jack-of-all-trades in the production. He created the make-up worn by Judy Geeson when she mutates into a monster and also designed the air pressure controlled twin aliens, operating them along with two assistants.

"It helped that I could work out how to do something before we wrote it into the script," Maley said. "When you work on this kind of picture a lot, you know there are things that will eventually end up not being used. We tried to join little things together to add up to something that hadn't been seen before. We want people to come out of the cinema wondering if the aliens were puppet animation or models or something else. We are making our models do more than they should do for puppets, which may make people think that it is animation, but then we pull the rug out from under them when the actors become involved in the action."

The cast is almost entirely what Gordon called "good solid British actors," with the exception of Jennifer Ashley and Robin Clark, two American actresses hired for their box-office draw in this country. But with a script that's mostly screaming and



**Top:** Caves in Kent, England were used for INSEMINOID's space station set, an inexpensive solution. **Inset:** Producers Richard Gordon and David Speechley, and director Norman Warren (back row, left to right) pose with cast members.

fighting, Gordon doesn't think the acting will be what sells the film. "Let's face it," he said, "in this type of film, you don't have roles that demand terrific acting ability."

Even so, INSEMINOID is a step up the ladder for its 38-year-old director, whose first horror film, SATAN'S SLAVE was produced for \$50,000 in 1975. "I've always been an admirer of Norman's work," said Gordon. "I always thought with a bigger budget and a better schedule he could really turn out something worthwhile. He just never seemed to get the opportunity."

"People do tend to get categorized by the level of picture they make," Gordon said. "I'm the same, except that I don't mind being categorized. I tend to look for this sort of picture because if you're good at it, you might just as well make good use of all that experience." □

## ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

By the year 1997, New York isn't even a nice place to visit anymore, in John Carpenter's first big-star, big-budget, all-union, production.

By George Turner

With a bigger budget and longer shooting schedule than *THE FOG* and *HALLOWEEN* combined, John Carpenter's *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* [10:26] has completed principal photography without major complications. The \$7 million production, slated for release by Avco-Embassy next summer, is a thematic break from Carpenter's recent films, placing more emphasis on large-scale action than high-pitched fright.

The film is set in 1997 in the aftermath of a large-scale war between a huge force of outlaws and the U.S. Police Force. The losers—three million convicted criminals—are imprisoned in a nightmarish vision of New York City, which has been transformed into a maximum security prison.

Escape is considered impossible: the surrounding waters are charged with electricity, guards armed with laser rifles are posted, and radar scanners and helicopter patrols keep

constant vigil. Food is dropped monthly into Central Park; otherwise, the outcasts are left to prey upon one another. The streets are ruled by roving gangs, while the underground subway and sewer tunnels are the province of the "Crazies," hoards of criminally insane creatures.

When Air Force One crashes, and the President of the United States (Donald Pleasance) is captured by the prisoners, master criminal Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) is sent in to get the president out. Russell, a futuristic pirate of sorts—down to the eye patch and stubble—must face the gangs, the Crazies, a giant gladiator named Slag, a variety of deadly weapons and the knowledge that explosives have been planted in his head to insure his cooperation.

The cast features Lee Van Cleef as a menacing police commissioner, Ernest Borgnine as a sympathetic cab driver and Isaac Hayes as a ruthless gang leader, as well as several alumni from Carpenter's other films: Russell (star of Carpenter's telefilm, *ELVIS*),

Tommy Atkins and wife Adrienne Barbeau (both stars of *THE FOG*). The film's key crew members are also past Carpenter associates: producer Debra Hill, cameraman Dean Cudney, and co-author Nick Castle, who played the killer in *HALLOWEEN*.

Many scenes set in futuristic New York were actually shot in St. Louis, Atlanta and on locations around Los Angeles. We accompanied the crew to the Sepulveda Dam in California's San Fernando Valley, where three nights of shooting were scheduled. Under the experienced hand of production designer Joe Alves (*JAWS*, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*), a crew of 65 had transformed the dam into a forbidding military police headquarters with gate houses, bunkers and other convincing structures.

Most of the principals were on hand at the location, along with a considerable number of uniformed extras outfitted in infra-red facial masks, pilots and stunt drivers. Except for a generator failure that plunged the area into near total darkness, Car-



John Carpenter (right) and cameraman Dean Cudney line up a shot at a California dam, which doubles as a futuristic prison.

per and Cudney (who also lensed *HALLOWEEN* and *THE FOG*) worked with smooth efficiency. "The three-month schedule isn't as easy as it sounds," said Cudney, who with 30 features to his credit is still one of the youngest cinematographers in the cameraman's union. "This picture is 90 percent visual, with a lot of short sequences that take a lot of time to set up. Everything is large, with complicated lighting, and there are many stunts and gags and unusual visual things."

Even in the often tedious, halt-and-go pace of production, the baleful atmosphere intended for the scene was evident, thanks in large measure to Cudney's lighting. The night shooting was made even more effective by Cudney's use of new "Ultra Speed Panatar" lenses that permit filming at incredibly low light levels.

In addition to the location work, Carpenter plans to use opticals, matte paintings and miniature effects, to be completed at Roger Corman's low-rent effects studio, built for New World's *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*. Carpenter has scheduled two months to edit the film, plus time to compose and mix his own score for Dolby stereo. □

Left: The President of the United States is captured when Air Force One crashes on the prison island of New York. Right: Kurt Russell stars as Snake, the master criminal authorities send in to get the president out safely.



## STAR TREK—THE PROPERTY: THE STUDIO DEALING IS JUST BEGINNING

Rumors about further voyages of the USS Enterprise are decidedly premature, say spokespersons for Paramount and Gene Roddenberry's Norway Company. Early discussions have begun between the two groups, but the question of what format the next incarnation of *STAR TREK* might assume (feature, telefilms or a TV series) has become a major stumbling block.

Not long after the release of *STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE*, Roddenberry completed a treatment for a semi-sequel most suited for feature film production. But the box-office response to *STAR TREK—TMP* makes that scenario unlikely.

Paramount, known for its reticence with financial data, had no comment on the film's box-office take to date, but a staffer at *Variety* pegged the figure at "close to \$100 million," which would place it near the projected break-even point. However, even if *STAR TREK—TMP* garners additional revenues from re-release and a network sale, it probably would fail to justify the risk of its \$40 million-\$50 million budget. In spite of the fact part of this cost was due to uncontrollable factors (the Robert Abel affair and the resulting highly-accelerated production schedule needed to meet the prearranged release date), another feature would still cost too

much to make it a viable option for Paramount.

Though studio executives reportedly viewed the Roddenberry treatment favorably, they seem to prefer a new *STAR TREK* television series. This is Roddenberry's least favorite option; he is leaning towards a succession of TV-movie specials. As has been noted previously, reassembling the original cast for another run as a weekly series is problematical at best.

Nevertheless, enthusiasm for *STAR TREK* is still high at Paramount. "STAR TREK is very much in our plans as some kind of project over the next year," Gary Nardino, president of Paramount television,

said recently. This seems curious in light of the fact that Roddenberry's company has moved out of its offices on the Paramount lot. Susan Sackett, Roddenberry's assistant, says the move was made voluntarily, because Norway Company had no ongoing contractual deal with Paramount and studio space is reserved for projects in active development.

The questions that remain to be answered are: if Roddenberry won't do a *STAR TREK* series for Paramount, can Paramount do the series without Roddenberry? And, could Paramount get the public to accept the new cast such a series would probably require? □

## SPACE VAMPIRES

Zoran Perisic to film  
Colin Wilson's  
existential novel.

By Randy White

In what may hopefully be a renewed partnership between science fiction literature and science fiction cinema, the Cannon Group will film Colin Wilson's 1976 best seller, *The Space Vampires*, a project with the potential to intellectually surpass the current rash of effects-oriented films.

Wilson's fiction, a stylistically complex blend of Lovecraftian pastiche and his own peculiar brand of existentialism, has long been considered unfilmable; his novels *The Mind Parasites*, *The Philosopher's Stone* and *The Glass Cage*—based on concepts espoused in his non-fiction work, *The Outsider*—are convoluted, probing stories difficult to translate visually.

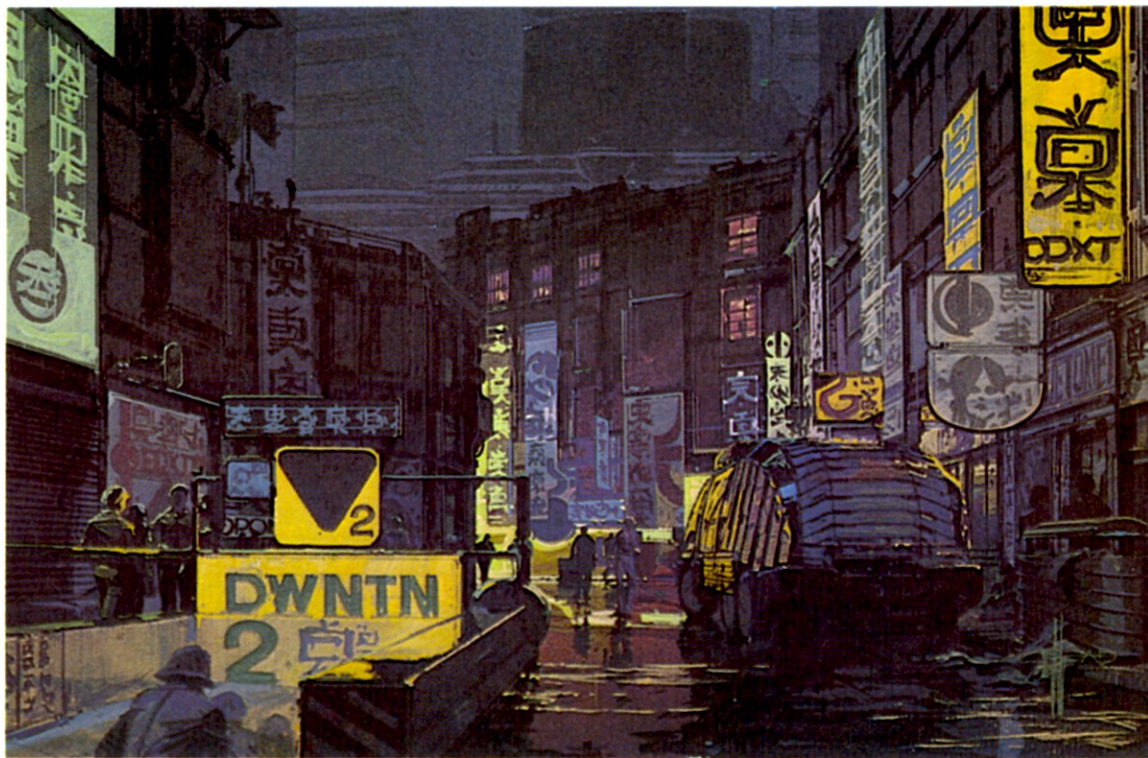
THE SPACE VAMPIRES, which probably holds the strongest cinematic possibilities of any Wilson book, concerns the discovery of a derelict spacecraft apparently containing the dead bodies of a humanoid crew. When the ship is brought to Earth, the astronauts find out the aliens are ravenous energy vampires, sucking out the life force during sexual acts.

Despite the apparent simplicity of the plot, Cannon is encountering difficulties in transferring the book to the screen; at least four scripts have been rejected. According to a Cannon source, the main problems seem to be compressing the story and turning Wilson's philosophies into acceptable screen fare. The sexual content of the novel apparently has also caused some corporate worries, since these first drafts have all dropped the carnal angle in favor of a more traditional blood-sucking approach. However, Cannon is considering reinserting the sexual element for the final script.

Zoran Perisic, inventor of the flying techniques used in *SUPERMAN*, will both direct and handle special effects. Perisic has put in a reported six months of preproduction design prior to the upcoming start of photography. No cast members have been signed for the film, tentatively set for a Christmas, 1981, release.

Although author Wilson will not be involved in the production, Cannon is trying for a faithful representation of his work. But one Cannon source admitted, "It's very difficult to make a visual piece out of this."

THE SPACE VAMPIRES will be shot at CCC Studios in Berlin, where Cannon previously filmed *THE APPLE* and *THE MAGICIAN OF LUBLIN*. Recently, the Berlin government has offered special loans to attract international filmmakers to the city, a tact now being considered by several state governments. □



A reproduction illustration for *BLADE RUNNER* by Syd Meade emphasizes the film's bleak "film noir" look. Note the reptilian-like vehicle inconspicuously parked at curbside, just one of many unusual cars designed by Meade for the film.

## BLADE RUNNER

A hot director and big-name effects crew make this a project to watch.

By P. B. Beene

The start of shooting is only weeks away for *BLADE RUNNER*, director Ridley Scott's \$15 million science fiction/mystery film, set for a late 1981 release by Filmways Pictures.

The film is a loose adaptation of Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, which concerns a not-so-distant future in which wars and a general ecological collapse have thinned out the human population and nearly annihilated all forms of animal life. Lifelike androids are common, as are robot pets, for the few who can afford them. The book is centered on a bounty hunter's quest for six renegade androids, the proceeds of which are to finance the purchase of an ostrich.

According to *BLADE RUNNER* sources, the android-hunt concept of Dick's novel has been retained and strengthened, but "substantial

changes" have occurred during preproduction—the dropping of the robot pet subplot, for one—to key in on the film's slightly surreal visuals.

Scott has spent the last six months working with first-time screenwriter Hampton Fancher ("It's one of the most striking scripts I've ever read," said Scott) defining and refining the look of the film. Preproduction visuals borrow heavily from both the eclectic stylings of *Heavy Metal* magazine and the *film noir* look of the '40s, with wind- and rain-swept streets, great canyon-like vistas and a crowded, seedy environment.

Such emphasis on the "look" of the film is not uncommon to Scott, who hired a quartet of top fantasy artists to help design *ALIEN*. For *BLADE RUNNER*, Scott has commissioned conceptual artist Syd Meade (responsible, in part, for the design of *V'ger* in *STAR TREK—TMP*) to complete a series of paintings and watercolors

depicting the urban *milieu* of the film and the cars that prowls its bleak streets. A great deal of the film's storyline apparently takes place within or around various vehicles—including a police hovercar, called a "spinner," which reportedly can fly or be used as a conventional car—and more than 100 full-scale, fully-operational Meade-designed cars are being built to serve as major set pieces, as well as for background color.

The film's title does not refer to one of Meade's vehicles, as had been previously reported. "Blade Runner," rather, is the code name for the android-chasing bounty hunter.

Though no firm deal was set as of press time, producer Michael Deeley (*THE DEER HUNTER*) is negotiating with Douglas Trumbull and long-time associate Richard Yuricich to handle the film's miniatures and complex special effects. Matthew Yuricich, responsible for the matte paintings in *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, will handle the extensive matte work anticipated to transform miniatures and conventional city streets into the story's somewhat futuristic urban bee-hive.

Joining Scott as associate producer will be veteran collaborator Ivor Powell, who supervised the day-to-day operations on Scott's two previous features, *ALIEN* and *THE DUELISTS*. Larry Paull will handle production design chores.

No cast members have been announced yet, in advance of a January start at the Burbank Studios. □

Director Ridley Scott at work preparing *BLADE RUNNER*, his first film since *ALIEN*.



# Somewhere in Time

## with Jeannot Szwarc

**S**OMEWHERE IN TIME is a brave, romantic fantasy that attempts to win back audiences captured by mega-buck productions. In these times the film's mission can only be termed quixotic, but that mission represents the yearning of its director, Jeannot Szwarc (pronounced *zhanno swark*). His relatively modest \$5.5 million production has a literary style that relies on the nuance of detail rather than heavy-handed special effects.

Ironically, it was Szwarc's direction of *JAWS 2*, successfully handling that \$20 million production's complicated and near-impossible effects, that allowed him to be somewhat selective with subsequent projects. But he still anticipates some difficulty in convincing Universal of the merits of his next film project, which he describes as "a kind of poetic, adult fantasy that has not been seen since Cocteau's *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*. Fantasy is the most difficult genre to pull off," says Szwarc. "It's had a very tricky

history in Hollywood. Even *THE WIZARD OF OZ* was not a huge hit when it first came out. I thought *HEAVEN CAN WAIT* was going to start a trend but it didn't."

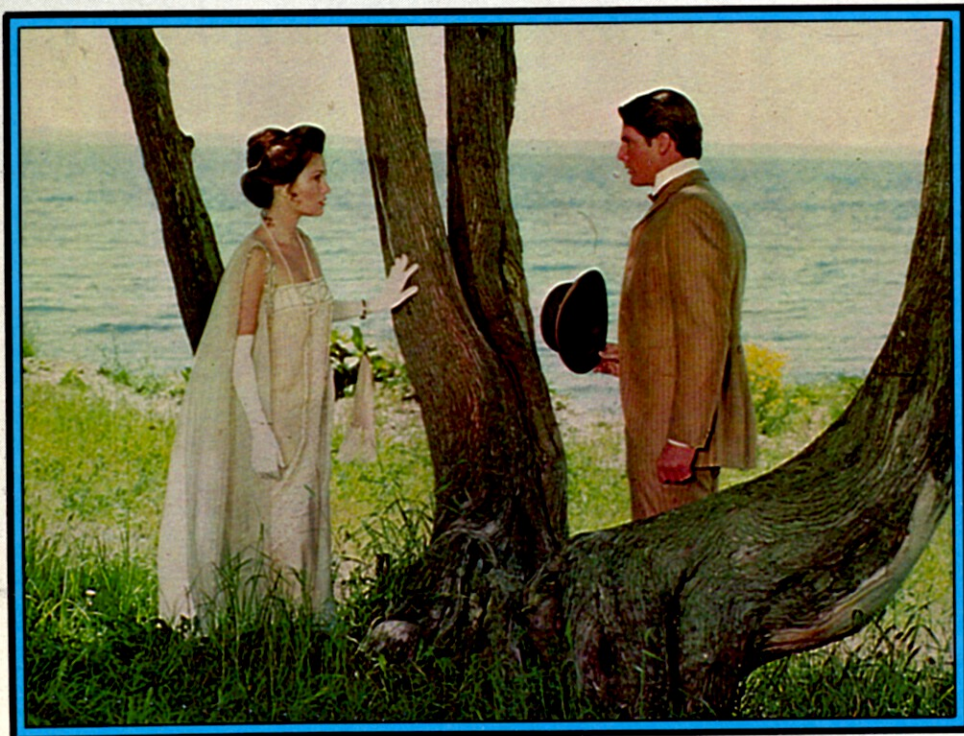
Szwarc intends to follow up *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* with *THE QUEST*, scripted by Broadway playwright Yale Yudoff (who wrote *BAD TIMING* for Nicholas Roeg). Based on Szwarc's original story, the film is set in a mythical, medieval land. Structurally, it is an obstacle course through magical forests and the like, with a surface similarity to *THE WIZARD OF OZ* but with a harder edge than L. Frank Baum's whimsical fantasy. For example, of the four characters engaged in *THE QUEST*, the leader is a knight whose flesh is slowly being consumed by leprosy. In seeking the fabled unicorn with the power to reverse a catastrophic loss, these characters have their very lives to gain, and little to lose.

"I'll tell you what it is," says Szwarc. "I'm obsessed with enchantment. To give you the

feel of it in *THE QUEST*, there's one scene where they walk into this little house. There's a wrinkled old woman sitting in profile, and a tree growing in the middle of the house. They ask her where the unicorn is and she gives a cryptic answer. Then one of them objects, 'But how do we know it even exists?' She turns to face them and says, 'Because I have seen it!' And we see that the other side of her face is 18 years old. The whole picture is like that."

One of the greatest obstacles hindering the creation of good *cinefantastique* (after timidity and lack of vision on the part of the film financiers) has been the relative dearth of creative talent with a true understanding of,

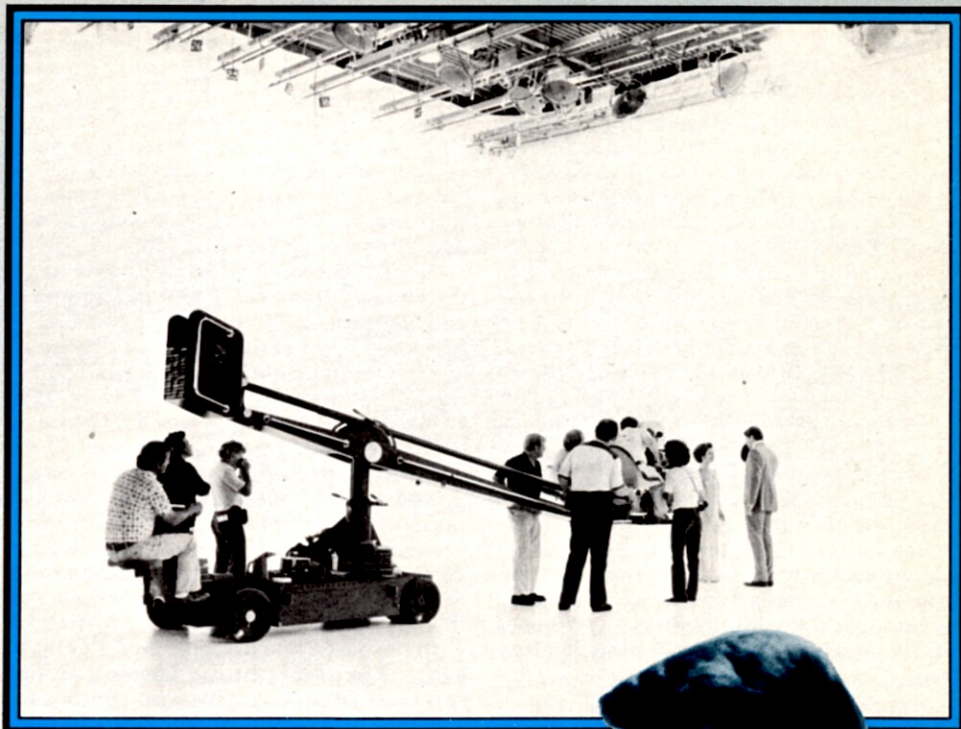
**After battling demons, cockroaches and sharks, they're letting Szwarc direct what he wants to: Poetic fantasy is alive and well/By Jordan R. Fox**



and appreciation for, the imaginative genres. This begins with the screenwriters, certainly, but most critically refers to the decision-makers. Project selection is made by financiers whose knowledge of fantasy genres may be limited, but sometimes a film can suffer even at the hands of a director or strong producer whose acquaintance with the genre is only superficial. Stanley Kubrick did not need vast expertise in science fiction to make 2001; he had Arthur C. Clarke. But with *THE SHINING*, we have seen a horror movie fashioned by an accomplished filmmaker who clearly knows very little about horror.

It seems reasonable for us to place our fondest hopes for a major contribution to horror, fantasy and science fiction films with directors like Jeannot Szwarc who have a thorough knowledge of the literature *and* with what has been achieved on film. In Hollywood, such people have never been in great supply, and that makes Szwarc a rarity. Now armed with the creative clout bestowed on him by the huge commercial success of *JAWS 2*, Szwarc intends to plumb the genre with regularity. *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* is some indication of what he is capable of. *THE QUEST* offers even greater promise.

Szwarc is drawn to this type of film material because, as he sees it, "the essence of film is fantasy. I could make a very good case that film has never been good at handling reality." He says, "Take a picture like *THE*



Jeannot Szwarc (left) directs Jane Seymour and Christopher Reeve for the concluding sequence of *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*. The setting is not "heaven" as many believed, but rather a romantic "limbo" where the two lovers can be together forever. Szwarc filmed the shot in a stark white-on-white sound stage, the same technique utilized in George Lucas' *THX-1138*. The limbo set is one of the few sequences not filmed at scenic Mackinac Island in Michigan, which offered, among other attributes, the panoramic background for the initial encounter between Reeve and Seymour (inset left). To differentiate scenes set in 1980 and those taking place 70 years ago, Szwarc used different film stocks—crisp, clean Kodak for the present, and soft-focusing Fuji for the past—to give each sequence the proper look and feel. Working with cinematographer Isadore Mankofsky, Szwarc decided to adopt two different shooting styles as well—long lenses and "realistic" lighting for the present; wide-angle lenses and "mood" lighting for scenes set in the past.

**GRAPES OF WRATH.** The subject matter is realistic, but the characters... how often do you run into people with such purity of commitments? They're all archetypes and myths and that's what elevates us.

"There are very few films being made now with any human feeling," says Szwarc. "Technically, films have gotten about as good as you could ask for, but they've gotten so cold. **CLOCKWORK ORANGE** was brilliant technically, but it was contemptible. It was dishonest. The way Kubrick portrayed men and women was a vomit. There's not one human being with any redeeming qualities, not one moment of human feeling or compassion.

"I shudder to think what they're going to do to **DUNE**," he says. "They're going to totally ignore the mythology of the book, which is basically the story of Mary and Christ—a prophecy, except that it's on another planet. They're going to throw all that out and just have special effects. In the long run, it's dangerous if we only keep turning out these big mothers. **JAWS** or a **STAR WARS** makes industry leaders greedy."

Szwarc directed some of the most memorable **NIGHT GALLERY** episodes of all. Top: Henry Darrow in "Cool Air," a Rod Serling script of Lovecraft's story about a doctor who tries, unsuccessfully, to cheat death. Bottom: A deadly "earwig" bores through Lawrence Harvey's head in "The Catapillar," a terrifying Serling script.



Outside of Woody Allen ("He's original. He's got heart, and he keeps getting better.") Szwarc doesn't see anyone in the contemporary film scene who holds much promise. "Please don't tell me that Brian DePalma is Hitchcock's heir," he says. "In terms of imagination and elegance, there will never be anyone like Hitchcock again. Besides the suspense, his characters were so rich, even when they only had five lines.

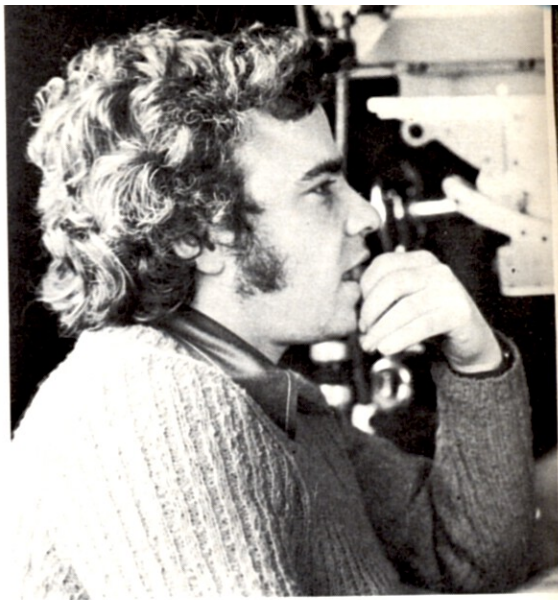
"John Ford made 60 films. I don't think there's any filmmaker today who's going to be able to make 60 films in his lifetime. It takes too long. Films are too expensive. There's too much of a risk. Let's face it, the era of the great filmmakers is over. Fritz Lang, Marcel Carne, Lubitsch, Hitchcock, Visconti, Rossellini—they were men of the world, cultured men."

Nevertheless, Szwarc wants to turn back the clock to that era and, despite the realities of the marketplace, recapture the qualities of good storytelling and solid filmmaking. **SOMEWHERE IN TIME** is a romance in that grand tradition, a film that experiments with the poetic and psychological side of the genre. The characters are bigger than life, great people with equally great aspirations.

Szwarc's admiration for the great filmmakers leads him to eschew the flashy camerawork of his contemporaries. "I don't like films where you're always being made aware of how brilliant the director is," he says. "Lenses up your kazoo, shooting from inside a phone, tricks and angles that don't mean anything—the audience should never be aware of lenses. In **ALIEN**, for example, there's a scene where the girl is in profile, and the captain is fuzzy in the background. Then the camera racks. They do that in commercials for special emphasis. It's an effect I never liked.

"The simpler it is, the better. John Ford, Jean Renoir, in their work you never know where the bloody camera is. It's sort of an unobtrusive witness. Try to watch for how it's done, and forget it. Inside of five minutes you're completely into the film."

To prepare the look of **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**, Szwarc lined his walls with Monets, Manets and Degas. Compatriots at Universal took to calling his office the Louvre West. Szwarc learned everything he knows about lighting from studying these great painters, and lighting is an important element of **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**. When young playwright Christopher Reeve first sees the portrait of Jane Seymour, whose mysterious beauty compels him to travel through time to find her, Szwarc uses lighting for effect. "The light obliterates the lens momentarily," Szwarc says, explaining the scene. "Everything becomes white, and out of the white the portrait reappears. I wanted to establish that there was something unique about the portrait, that it was love at first sight, which is hard to show visually. I wanted the portrait to be like a magnet pulling him. He feels someone looking at him, he turns, sees the portrait, and starts walking towards it. It is kind of like ESP—as if there were some force there beckoning him. As he walks towards it, the fact that he cannot see it for an instant, but then sees it again gives it a very magical quality. In a way it's also symbolic of what comes later." At the end, the light is there again, this time for a supernatural effect,



representing the hero's soul as it is reunited with his lover's, beyond present time and space.

Szwarc's one-man campaign to revive the romantic tradition in film began in a Paris bookstore, the only one that carried any imaginative literature. It was there that he first came across Baudelaire's translation of Poe, which was to become a major influence on his work. Szwarc was already a film buff, having seen an estimated 250 films a year while in college. He received a master's degree in International Political Science from H.E.C. (often described as the French Harvard) with a course of study leading to the diplomatic corps.

Szwarc quickly became bored with his studies and put a great deal of his interest into forming a theatre group, which managed to mount some respectable productions, although most of the members were self-taught. Always the film buff, he founded a cine-club to cater to students at the college, but soon attracted a wider following.

Though accepted into a doctoral program at Harvard, Szwarc was by now determined to make a career in film. He managed to find work with a Paris production company turning out documentaries and commercials, and in time became a second unit director. When the French film industry went into a tailspin in the early '60s, Szwarc decided to try his luck in Hollywood. From 1964 to 1967, that luck was "pretty lousy." Except for some ghostwriting, he was mostly out of work for three years. Recalls Szwarc, "I realized nobody was going to let me direct anyhow, so I started writing, and improving my English."

In 1967, he landed a temporary job at Universal, and while there, wrote a 70 page treatment on spec. The studio advised him he was wasting his time. Szwarc wrote **THE CHOICE** anyway and submitted it with full story "pitch" as a made-for-TV project. The studio said it was too philosophical. Refusing to give up, he lobbied for Universal to send it on to NBC. When the network purchased it immediately and asked for more, Szwarc was put under contract.

Szwarc's first assignment was as associate producer on **CHRYSLER THEATRE**, where he worked for producer Gordon





Hessler, (later director of *THE OBLONG BOX* and *SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN*). While at this post, Szwarc met Harlan Ellison, Ted Sturgeon and other writers, but was singularly unable to find any receptivity towards genre subject matter in the higher echelons. "At that time, *no one* (in the executive ranks) was interested in science fiction," says Szwarc. "And nobody had even heard of what I call poetic or psychological science fiction."

Szwarc *did* arrange a meeting between Hessler and Sturgeon regarding "More Than Human." Network or studio interest proved moot, however, when Sturgeon sought major feature terms for the rights.

His work on *CHRYSLER THEATRE* led to the same position on *IRONSIDE*, where Szwarc got his first directing shot. He went on to direct episodes for a variety of popular television series, assorted telefilms and several pilots. Among his more prestigious assignments were two well-regarded Hallmark Hall of Fame specials [one of which was *LISA, BRIGHT AND DARK*—reviewed 3:4:35]. When Rod Serling's *NIGHT GALLERY* debuted, Szwarc quickly became one of its resident directors.

Anthologies tend to be uneven, and *NIGHT GALLERY* was more uneven than most. The series attempted to make good use of some classic occult stories by writers like August Derleth and H.P. Lovecraft, but for every fine episode like "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" or "They're Tearing Down Tim Riley's Bar," there were several undistinguished shows like "The Different Ones," an obviously inferior retread of Serling's own "Eye of the Beholder" from *TWILIGHT ZONE*. Critics and viewers were disappointed with the series, which premiered with high expectations attendant on the Serling name. Szwarc says he saw little evidence of Serling's reported disaffection from the series on grounds of creative interference. He still feels that the change to a half-hour format was harmful, and that the critics only bothered to watch a few episodes. NBC was never very comfortable with the series, and the fair-to-middling ratings sealed its fate.

In all, Szwarc directed about 20 of the 90 *NIGHT GALLERY* episodes, including two of the more memorable ones. "Sins of the Fathers," with its psychological horror deriving from the atmosphere surrounding the

Top Left: Szwarc cut his teeth as a director on Rod Serling's *NIGHT GALLERY*, directing more than 20 segments of the show during its three-year run. Top Center: Richard Thomas, Barbara Steele and Michael Dunn (lower left) in "Sins of the Fathers," a tense drama set in 19th century Wales. Top Right: Tim Matheson and Patrick MacNee are featured in "Logoda's Heads," a Robert Bloch script about revenge and witch doctors.

**I don't like films where you're always being made aware of how brilliant the director is. Lenses up your kazoo, shooting from inside a phone, tricks and angles that don't mean anything.**

ancient Welsh rite of sin-eating, had a particularly strong cast (Richard Thomas, Geraldine Page, Barbara Steele) and a script that had great difficulty getting past the censor. In "The Caterpillar" (a deceptively soft title if ever there was one), Laurence Harvey is a planter in Borneo who schemes to eliminate the husband of his paramour (Joanna Pettet) with an exotic but deadly insect, the earwig. By a careless error, Harvey falls victim to his own trap. In one of the most horrifying *ideas* ever dramatized on television, Harvey suffers the slow agony of waiting for the earwig to bore its way through his brain (the insect travels in a straight line and is incapable of turning around) and emerge from the opposite ear. Somehow he manages to survive the ordeal, but when the insect is dissected by Harvey's physician, it is found to be a female that has shed its egg sac. The last shots show a closeup of Harvey's face forming into a soundless scream, and then the camera pulls back to a long shot of his jungle-side house, with a long, loud scream on the soundtrack.

Szwarc seldom had more than three days to shoot an episode, so, together with art director Joe Alves and the cameraman, he had to

devise a system of maximum preparation, and put in very long hours. "Television is a great way of learning your craft," says Szwarc, "because you have to make decisions very quickly, and hope the decisions are right. You have to be strong on concept, since there's no time to try things and change your mind later. Television is really the art of walking away. You're never going to get a scene perfect; it's impossible. What you have to do is be realistic and say, 'this is the best we can get.' But you can do good work."

Szwarc dismisses notions of a necessary difference between film style and television style. "I know some people say television is a medium of closeups. That's nonsense. When you look at Ford's *MY DARLING CLEMENTINE* on television, which has some of the most beautiful wide shots ever done on film, it works. To me, directing is translating literary material into visual terms. Content dictates the style. It's always the same problem: what is the best way to execute a scene visually?"

"So many of the cameramen, producers, and writers come from television," he says, "but when they get their break, they turn around and say, 'We don't do television.'" Directors, like one-time fellow Universal contractees Steven Spielberg, John Badham and Randal Kleiser are still traveling from television to the big screen, but they don't come back. Szwarc has seen the quality level of most television drama plummet from the high point of his arrival in this country—when there were outstanding episodic programs on like *NAKED CITY*, *EAST SIDE*, *WEST SIDE*, and *THE DEFENDERS*—to its present sorry state. Szwarc feels the medium still has great potential, and given a drastic change in network policy, he would be willing to undertake more television projects. "It depends on the material," he says. "I would want to do some Kafka or Borges. Sartre's *No Exit* would be great on television. But the answers I get (from TV executives) is that this is too intelligent or too sophisticated."

In 1973, Szwarc was having dinner with a small group of people, Michael Crichton among them, when the conversation turned to two lines of discussion: why there was no cinematic equivalent of the literary "I," and why there had been so little good eroticism in films (a chat held before the debut of *LAST TANGO IN PARIS* and other "legit" porn).



Szwarc, always willing to venture a theory, suggested that most on-screen sex caused the audience to feel embarrassed, as if they had opened the wrong door in real life and found two people going at it. The only way to legitimize it for a regular audience, he speculated, would be to turn the audience into voyeurs, much as Hitchcock had in *REAR WINDOW*. Crichton happened to have an old script on a related theme—invasion of privacy. Financing was arranged, and the result was Szwarc's first theatrical feature, *EXTREME CLOSE-UP*, the story of a television newsman preparing a report on surveillance equipment who becomes intrigued and seduced with the voyeur's hardware: telescopic camera lenses, night scopes and powerful shotgun mikes. The film was brought in for \$130,000, and preceded *THE CONVERSATION* (Francis Ford Coppola's rendering of the same thematic material) by a year. The financing company wanted more sex, however, and Szwarc and Crichton wanted time to substantially rework the script. The forced compromises pleased no one. Bertolucci's *LAST TANGO IN PARIS* was released, and by comparison virtually rendered *EXTREME CLOSE-UP* a 'PG.' Distributor National General, which had the early Bruce Lee films and *THE WICKER MAN* among its inventory, folded shortly thereafter. Today, Szwarc's experiment with subjective camera in *EXTREME CLOSE-UP* is known only to a few film buffs.

William Castle was one of the first film people Szwarc got to know when he relocated in California. No film resulted from their friendship for several years, but they would often seek each other's opinion about a script. When Castle had a script for a novel he had acquired, *The Hephaestus Plague*, he asked Jeannot what he thought of it, and by the way, would he be interested in directing it? "People are either going to die laughing," Szwarc replied, "or maybe we can do something with it..." Unfortunately, when it was released in 1975 as *BUG*, people laughed.

"What really fascinated me," Szwarc recalls, "was the idea of making a character out of the cockroaches." The titular critters were truly repulsive in appearance—a very large cockroach with an armadillo-like shell. The story presented them as some unknown subterranean species released by a violent earthquake, and able to set objects on fire.

Szwarc only directed three features prior to *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*, running the gamut from the seldom-seen *EXTREME CLOSE-UP* (top left) a low-budget film about electronic voyeurism, to Universal's mega-buck sequel, *JAWS II* (top center), a \$20 million fiasco Szwarc is credited as "saving." In between, he filmed *BUG* (Szwarc is shown directing Bradford Dillman, top right), a poorly-received story about giant cockroaches.

**It was the biggest disaster in the history of Universal. They had spent \$10 million and they had nothing. All I went in with was knowing I had to make it scary, and that I had to finish it.**

Actually, they were Madagascar cockroaches imported by the agricultural school at the University of California, Riverside. Insect specialist Ken Middleham (*THE HELLSTROM CHRONICLE*) spent three months in painstaking macro-photography beyond the close of live-action filming. In one amazing shot, the cockroaches spell 'We Live' on a wall, done by anesthetizing the insects in the word form, and shooting them in reverse as they woke up and became active.

*BUG* opened the same day as Universal's *JAWS*. As William Castle's last production, it's the kind of nice, dumb, fun, old-fashioned horror exercise that audiences have been known to enjoy. But between the poor ad campaign, the competition and a regime change at Paramount, *BUG* never had a chance. But Szwarc had brought the union-crowded film in for \$600,000, so he derived some satisfaction when it made a profit and went on to become a minor cult item in Europe, beating out *SILENT RUNNING* for a top prize at the Paris Science Fiction Film Festival.

But *BUG*'s major consequence was that it indirectly got Szwarc the assignment for his

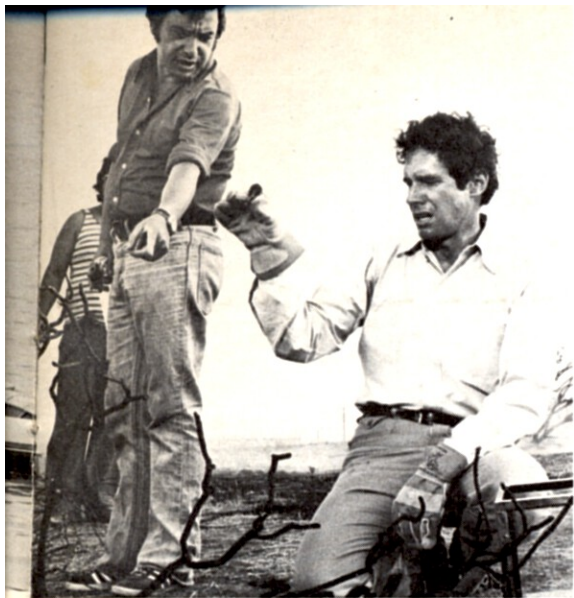
next feature. "I was hot enough in television that I could pick and choose what I wanted to do. After what happened to *BUG*, I decided not to jump right into another project. The next one had to be either a big commercial picture, or a personal artistic one." Szwarc's reputation as a budgetary miracle worker was about to go on the shelf, though, because the project in question was *JAWS 2*. "It was the biggest disaster in the history of Universal," Szwarc laughs. "They had spent \$10 million, and they had nothing."

Veteran film editor turned Universal executive Verna Fields saw just the opening earthquake sequence from *BUG* (which she knew had been shot in one day) and said, "That's the guy." Production designer Joe Alves also pitched Szwarc's name to producers Zanuck and Brown. The screening of a two-hour reel of the director's work was called for. Fields, Zanuck and Brown, and other Universal executives reached a quick decision. The job was his if he wanted it, but studio chief Ned Tanen almost tried to talk him out of it. "This is a nightmare," Tanen told Szwarc. "Our head of production thinks the film cannot be made."

"I knew it wasn't going to be a cinematic masterpiece," Szwarc conceded. "All I went in with was knowing I had to make it scary, and that I had to *finish* it. My thinking was that if I could pull it off, it would allow me to do the things I really wanted to do." A week and a half later he was in Florida. Szwarc found that only 90 seconds of all the footage previous director John Hancock had shot would be suitable. Disliking the script anyway, he decided to retain only the action stunts from the last third of the original script—physically the most difficult to film—and to shoot these first, which would allow time for major script revisions on the dialogue and characters.

Four separate camera units were established—the main one with Szwarc, the second unit under Joe Alves, and two others—but each orchestrated by Szwarc. "The whole picture was done like a Chinese puzzle," says Szwarc. "There was no script for five weeks. The shark never would do the same thing twice—and it was supposed to do so many specific things. It was a case of constantly having to re-vamp concepts within the scene: 'OK, this doesn't work, so we'll try *this*.'"

"In the first one, you just see the shark a



little bit. Here, he had to bite cables and attack boats. We had 70 boats; we had to anchor *everything*, including the island, which was a set. There were so many problems no one anticipated: it was freezing in northern Florida, then the invasion of jellyfish, and the invasion of butterflies in the middle of filming what was supposed to be the most horrifying scene."

To film the script's many shark POV shots, one of the three mechanical sharks was outfitted with a cowboy saddle so the cameraman could shoot hand-held shots. For surfacing and surface-skimming shots, the crew built an engine-driven plastic bell, despite Navy advice that such a contraption would never work. Always, the tides, currents, and changeable horizon supplied endless headaches.

The sheer technical problems of filming *JAWS 2* caused production to drag on for months. But in time, the problems yielded to persistence, determination, and the military precision of the Szwarc/Alves planning. The film not only made its release date, but surprisingly went on to become the most successful sequel ever. Szwarc's strategy had paid off, but as a result, he found himself awash in offers to direct mega-budget effects pictures—not exactly the original idea.

It was in connection with one of these mammoth productions—a space movie Rastar was considering at the time—that Szwarc met Stephen Deutsch, then a vice-president of Stark's company. Deutsch showed Szwarc a copy of Richard Matheson's *Bid Time Return*, which became the basis for *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*. Three years earlier, Deutsch had met with Richard Matheson to buy the film rights. The novel, which won the World Fantasy Award, was Matheson's pet book, and he was reluctant to sell it to the movies. But Deutsch impressed Matheson with his sincere feeling for the story.

*Bid Time Return's* plot, involving two lovers separated by time, is not terribly original, but in Matheson's hands, it's one of the best treatments of this theme. For Hollywood to do the book faithfully, however, it took some daring, because the closest antecedents to this kind of film lay well back in film history. But to Jeannot Szwarc, a self-declared romantic who feels that contemporary films have

achieved ever greater technical proficiency, while becoming ever more cold and sterile, this was just the ticket. "I love films of the '40s. I miss beautiful people, beautiful images, beautiful words, idealized emotions. If I didn't believe in the need for romanticism," exclaims Szwarc, "I'd have to jump out the window, and it would be all over."

After convincing Universal to take a gamble on *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*, Szwarc and Deutsch scouted locations for the film's grand hotel. They found just what they wanted in the aptly-named Grand Hotel, a 600-room luxury getaway on Michigan's Mackinac Island, located in the picturesque waters connecting Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

Even though Szwarc and Deutsch first saw the hotel when it was frozen over and closed for the winter, they had no doubts: the 90-year-old hotel had changed little outwardly since its construction and would be ideally suited for the film. But it took some effort to convince local officials to permit the crew to film during the peak tourist season, and to let Chris Reeve drive his sports car to the Grand Hotel's front door; only horses, carriages and bicycles are normally allowed on the island.

Szwarc collaborated closely with screenwriter Richard Matheson on the film, working in for him a clever cameo role and taking him on location for possible script changes. The matter extends beyond simple courtesy, says Szwarc. "I just do not believe that somebody on a set, on the spur of the moment, is going to come up with something better than the writer, who spent weeks and weeks at the typewriter working on concept."

Although *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* has been in release since early October, the verdict has yet to come in on whether Szwarc's old-fashioned romantic approach to fantasy will be a commercial success. Nicholas Meyer's *TIME AFTER TIME* mined a similar vein last year to disappointing box office results. "I really liked *TIME AFTER TIME*," says Szwarc. "It should have done better than it did."

While Meyer's film garnered generally favorable critical notices, *SOMEWHERE*

*IN TIME* has taken a critical drubbing, often for being overly sentimental. In particular, some critics have taken exception to the film's maudlin ending, apparently set in "heaven."

"We wanted them reunited," says Szwarc, "because this is a love that transcends time and lasts for eternity. Even though it's sort of a sad ending, I wanted there to be a fulfillment for the audience."

"What happens at the end, as the camera starts to go up to the ceiling," says Szwarc, "is that his soul becomes the camera. When it reaches the ceiling, it turns down, and he can see himself—the doctor working on his body. Then the camera pans to the window and this supernatural light appears. The camera goes towards the window and she's there. At the end when the camera stops, she's looking at the lens. Her eyes register some movement, and he steps in front of the lens. They are together again for all time, back as they were when they first met."

But *where* are they? "They are together again somewhere in time and space," says Szwarc, perhaps pointing out the significance of the film's title change. "Some people will say it's heaven, but I never thought so. The limbo set is just symbolic. I could give you a Kabbalist interpretation, if you'd like..."

So what's next? Szwarc has strong hopes he will be able to film *THE QUEST* as his next project. "I've been trying to get it off the ground for 10 years," he says. It took four months of the two years required to bring *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* to the screen just to sell Universal on the project, and Szwarc anticipates no easier time convincing the studio of the merits of his next fantasy project. Due to the great difficulty of getting a production commitment for the films he most wants to make, Szwarc constantly has numerous other projects in development.

But if all goes his way, *THE QUEST* could be in production by next summer. In the meantime, he seems not the least bit concerned about the possibility of becoming 'typed' as a director of fantasy films. Assents Szwarc: "Jean Cocteau did all right." □

In *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*, Christopher Reeve is a modern-day playwright who falls so deeply in love with a 70-year-old portrait of Jane Seymour that nothing—not even time itself—can stop him from reaching her.





"SCANNERS"

"THE BROOD"

"RABID"

"THEY CAME FROM WITHIN"

# DAVID CRONENBERG

CANADA'S ONE-MAN HORROR INDUSTRY SHAKES  
OFF THE STIGMA OF BEING A 'SCHLOCK' DIRECTOR.

ARTICLE AND INTERVIEW BY PAUL M. SAMMON

**A** well-groomed young man stands on the high balcony of a luxuriously sterile apartment complex, suddenly wheels to the railing and vomits into space; a moment later, far below, a bloody, slime-covered fecal-like *thing* thumps off an old woman's umbrella and slithers off through the grass.

A group of maddened urbanites, infected with a furious disease which causes them to drool and excrete fluids from their mouths and other facial orifices, are gunned down by the National Guard and then stuffed into garbage trucks.

A mad-woman in an isolated pseudo-psychiatric clinic exorcises her own inner demons in a most literal way—by breeding them on the surface of her body in a series of external wombs.

A telepath gives a demonstration of his talents in a coldly-lit corporation board room; the next moment, vibrating in agony, his head explodes in a ghastly shower of brains and bone.

What is this? Nightmares? Horror stories? Bad, bad jokes?

No—it's only David Cronenberg.

In just five remarkable years, Cronenberg has arguably emerged as the finest director to ride the crest of the resurgent horror-film wave. Rereading the above bits from, respectively, *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN* (1975), *RABID* (1977), *THE BROOD* (1979) and *SCANNERS* (1981), his new film to be released in January by Avco-Embassy, one might be inclined to think that Cronenberg is nothing more than a slightly bent showman, someone whose reputation stems from convincing audiences that, in a genre not exactly known for subtlety, he is, indeed, "king of schlock horror," as dubbed in his native Canada.

"More blood!" was Cronenberg's first remark on seeing the tableau at left, designed for his photo session. The remark triggered a round of laughter from observers present in the office of Avco project director Mick Garri. Cronenberg's wife had predicted exactly what he would say. During filming of *THE BROOD*, actor Art Hindle gave Cronenberg a T-shirt that read "More blood! More blood!" Admitted the director, "Yeah, I do say that sometimes."

Cronenberg refused to smile for the photo-

**'A lot of people think of film as an escape to entertainment. I think of horror films as art. I think of them as films that make you confront aspects of your own life that are difficult to face.'**

grapher, but his chiseled, collegiate good looks still provided a stark contrast to the grisly preoccupations of his work. With his wife in hand and baby son Brandon decked out in a *SCANNERS* T-shirt, Cronenberg is obviously a dedicated family man. Lurking behind the bizarre horror of his films is a rather ordinary social figure.

There is obviously more to Cronenberg's success in horror films than ladling-on extra dollops of fake blood. The Cronenberg images cited above are the handiwork of a sophisticated, sardonic, intelligent filmmaker, one of the most unsettlingly original talents ever to grace the genre.

Cronenberg's technical and story telling abilities have more than evidently grown with each project. His improvement, film after film, is a clear example of a major generic talent gaining in both self-confidence and adeptness at handling his material. Film societies have begun to recognize this and festivals honoring Cronenberg's work have included major retrospectives at Sitges, Munich and Metz, and screenings at gatherings as disparate as Edinburgh, Montreal and San Diego.

*You've been labeled "the reigning king of schlock horror" by fellow Canadians. Do you feel uncomfortable with that title?*

In the beginning of my career, definitely not. I encouraged it. It was a defense. To say that what you do is in some way art or artful or artistic leaves you vulnerable, very open. Andy Warhol stands on that defense himself. He says, "Oh yeah, my stuff is trash. No

question about it." It's very hard for people to attack you when you say that. Plus the fact that my acceptance of that crown connected me with AIP and Roger Corman, which wasn't such a bad thing. But I should also point out that, in the sense that schlock means inferior goods, my films are by this time just as aesthetically and technically good as any films that are being made. So I suppose I would resist that label now.

*Why did you choose horror films?*

When I looked at Corman's and other people's films I thought, okay, these guys make mistakes. But the genre has enough power and clarity to help carry them through that. When the stuff they were doing suddenly did click it had enough momentum to make the film worth seeing. The field has a lot of flexibility to it. You can do some terrific stuff.

**D**avid Cronenberg was born in Toronto, Canada, on March 15, 1943. "When they said, 'Beware the Ides of March,' I'm sure they weren't referring to me." His mother, still living, is a pianist. His father was a writer, contributing a stamp column to a now-defunct Toronto newspaper for nearly 35 years. Cronenberg's father (a definite influence on his son, as we shall later see), also wrote and published a series of soft-covered magazines called *True Canadian Crime Stories* in the 1940s. Writing most of these stories under assumed names, Cronenberg senior also wrote the storylines for various Canadian comic books during World War II.

Cronenberg remembers his childhood as a good one. "It was unusually nice, I think. I had a very close family, one that was relatively calm in terms of personalities. And my parents were generally supportive of anything I did." Fascinated by the natural sciences, Cronenberg was drawn to entomology and lepidoptry, the capturing and mounting of butterflies and moths. Cronenberg also credits that interest with drawing him to the writings of Vladimir Nabokov, a well-known professional lepidoptrist in his own right.

The writing bug bit deep; by the age of nine Cronenberg considered himself to be a potential novelist. An habitual reader of fantasy and science fiction, he submitted a short story to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science*

Fiction in 1959 when he was 16 years old. Concerning a dwarfed, disfigured handyman living in a boiler room who can project himself into his one treasure, a painting depicting a gay Paris cafe, the story was ultimately rejected. "But it was a near-miss," said Cronenberg. "I got a very good personal note from the editor." He now concentrates his writing solely on screenplays.

*Just what do you see as being horror?*

There's a Latin quote that goes "*Timor mortis conturbat me*," which, roughly translated, means, "The fear of death disturbs me." I think that death is the basis of all horror. For me, death is a very specific thing. It's very physical. There's where I become Cartesian, you see. Descartes was obsessed with the schism between mind and body, and how one relates to the other.

Another aspect of horror, and it's certainly a part of my films, is revulsion. But I've mixed feelings on that. I have to tell people that some of the things that they think are repulsive in my films are meant to be repulsive, yes, but there's a beautiful aspect to them as well. There's true beauty in some things that others find repulsive. I can only say that's the way I feel, and sometimes it's very difficult to convey that.

*George Romero once said that his films work because they deal with childhood fears. In response to that, you've been quoted as saying that your films work because they deal with adult fears.*

Yes. Of course, there's a connection between adult fears and childhood fears. I suppose I was really quibbling there. But it seems to me that there's a broadening of the scope of one's fears as one gets older. Worries like aging, death, and disease—I don't think those are fears that children have. Romero, I think, was talking about fears like dreading dark hallways. What I am talking about is meatier, more complex.

**A**fter attending local schools, Cronenberg enrolled in the University of Toronto in 1961, taking courses in biochemistry and biology. "The subject matter was fascinating, but I found that the people who were in science . . . well, I just couldn't relate to them. At all. I didn't enjoy them, I didn't understand them, I felt quite alone among them. I realized that if I were going to have to live my professional life among scientists, I just wouldn't be happy. I guess I prefer the metaphor of science to the reality of science."

Before dropping out, however, Cronenberg wrote a short story which took first place in a university writing competition. This attracted the attention of the English department, whose members were puzzled at how a first-year science student could win out over fourth-year literature majors. The next school year Cronenberg enrolled in Honor's English, a comprehensive four-year course. He completed two years of this program, took a year off for an extended visit of France and Europe, and then returned to complete a third year of General English. "At that point, I suddenly realized that the life of academia was not for me. Although I found it fascinating, I certainly knew I wasn't going to be an English teacher." Cronenberg graduated in 1967 with a degree in English literature.

## 16 MM CRONENBERG

David Cronenberg's first films were 16mm shorts, made while a student at the University of Toronto. "I was 22 or 23 before I ever realized you could make a movie," said Cronenberg. "I never realized that I had access to the machinery of production until I saw a film made by students at the school called WINTER KEPT US WARM, which is a quote from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. There were a lot of people in the film who were my friends. I can't describe the shock and exhilaration I felt seeing a movie made by people that I knew. I got very excited. To me it was an incredible revelation."

There were no film courses of any kind at the University, so Cronenberg began to read issues of *American Cinematographer*, looking up terms in the encyclopedia. To learn about cameras, he studied lenses and hung around film sites where cameramen were at work. Explained Cronenberg: "I can be a techno-freak, like I am with my car, and I approached film in that manner. When I felt I knew enough about the technology, I went out and shot my own film."

That was TRANSFER, a seven-minute, 16mm color short Cronenberg shot in 1966 with Nagra sound. He recorded and cut the sound, as well as the picture, himself. The script, which Cronenberg wrote, told the story of a patient who follows his psychiatrist out to the country because the doctor represents the only relationship with any meaning in his life. "It was a surreal little thing," said Cronenberg, "with people out in fields of snow, sitting at tables set with food and tablecloths as if they were inside."

He made another 16mm short the following year called FROM THE DRAIN, running 14 minutes and using a bit of stop-motion animation at the end. The film shows two men, fully clothed, having a conversation in a bathtub. "Do you come here often," says one of them, breaking the ice. It turns out that they are veterans of a future war, one a secret agent, the other an expert at chemical and biological warfare. As they talk, a bit of mutated sewer slime snakes its way up from the tub drain and strangles the scientist as the secret agent begins to take notes. Cronenberg animated the rampaging plant using green wire.

"How effective it was is hard for me to say," he admitted. "I haven't seen either TRANSFER or FROM THE DRAIN in a long, long time." Cronenberg has no prints himself, and while the two titles are catalogued in the University of Toronto library (both as 1966), the films themselves are not to be found.

Cronenberg directs FROM THE DRAIN.



Academia's loss was cinema's gain. Cronenberg began making 16mm shorts at the University of Toronto in 1966, including TRANSFER, and FROM THE DRAIN, which featured a bit of stop-motion animation. "I loved films like THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD as a kid," said Cronenberg. "The technique is quite astounding and quite wonderful. But I've never been a fan in the sense that I've wanted to use it, except in that one instance. I never got into it in a really technical way."

Cronenberg was more interested in exploring ideas in his films. Three years later he graduated to doing 35mm features. STEREO and CRIMES OF THE FUTURE were made non-professionally and explored many of the themes that would continue to recur in his professional work: ESP, mutations, bizarre biological horrors. Important as seminal examples of Cronenberg's work, the films themselves are arty, overly pretentious, and statically boring. Despite that, or perhaps because of it, the films began to garner for him a name and reputation as an underground filmmaker.

*You've been quoted as saying that horror is a genre of confrontation. Could you amplify?*

A lot of people think of film, in general, as an escape, an escape to entertainment. But I think of horror films as art, as films of confrontation. I think of them as films that make you confront aspects of your own life that are difficult to face. In that way, horror's just like any other serious genre.

*Horror films are art?*

Just because you're making a horror film doesn't mean you can't make an artful film. Tell me the difference between someone's favorite horror film and someone else's favorite art film. There really isn't any, you know. Emotions, imagery, intellect, your own sense of self—all of this can be included in a horror film. No matter what a great many people will tell you, art is totally subjective anyway.

*But horror films are suspect because of their trashy elements.*

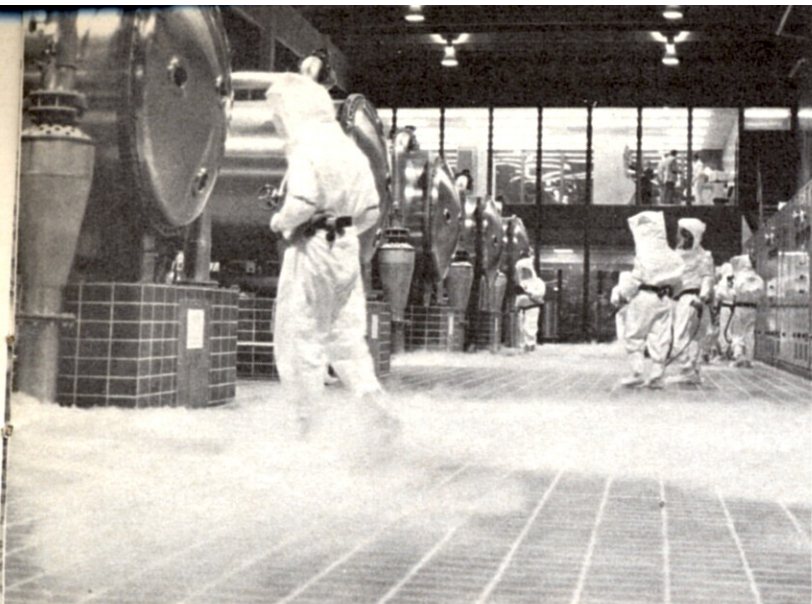
I remember a remark of Pauline Kael's where she was discussing American film and defending it against European art films. She was quoting Nabokov, an idol of mine by the way, which made it perfect. She said that there's nothing quite so exhilarating as philistine vulgarity. To me, that really struck a chord, because I respond to films that have energy and action and movement and motion as much as anybody else does. But I also think that if that's all a film's got, it's not enough. Or it's certainly not all that it can be.

*For you, then, horror films are basically cathartic?*

Oh, definitely. I don't think they work if they're not. Seeing a horror film is like thinking of voting for Goldwater. It's something you want to see or do up on the screen where it's not irrevocable. If you go to a horror movie, you can do it and still walk out in one piece, physically and emotionally.

I think catharsis is the basis of all art. This is particularly true of horror films, because horror is so close to what's primal. That's why I go crazy when people talk about horror films being bad influences on young people. I don't think people who say that have any understanding of human psychology at all.

*Hasn't that argument been discounted?*



People still propose it. Everytime some mother's kid kills someone she says it's television that did it, just because he watched too much TV. Yet with the success of the genre, I think it's well understood that kids enjoy horror. They don't go out and attack people because of it.

To the general public, a person who makes horror films must be a culpable freak. Of course, if people meet me, then they see I'm not a slathering maniac and I'm not particularly brutal.

Robin Wood, a critic who wrote some negative things about my films—which, unfortunately for him, were based on misinterpretations—once said that on the basis of my films I must want apocalypse in my life. He was wrong. I don't want apocalypse in my life at all. I want epiphanies.

People ask, "Don't you feel you have a huge responsibility because of the films you make? How can you bear the weight of that responsibility?" To them I say, "I'm carrying the weight of that responsibility very well. I think that these films are good for people. They're not bad for people."

**C**ronenberg had taken low-budget, personal filmmaking as far as he wanted, or could. Casting about for a way to get into the business professionally, he decided to show his prints of *STEREO* and *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE* to producers. In Canada in the early '70s, there weren't a lot to choose from. He wound up at the offices of Cinepix, "basically the only company in Canada that had any continuity in film production." Cinepix made mostly sex films, some in French, that got little distribution outside of Canada.

Cronenberg had steeled himself for total rejection, and was surprised when he actually got a favorable response. ("They said they liked my films!") Cinepix was interested because they were always looking for young (read inexpensive), new directors. In that regard they were a lot like Roger Corman and AIP in their willingness to give first-time directors a chance. Eventually, Cronenberg entered into discussions on some of the sex film projects they had in development. "They were rather sweet, warm-hearted little films in light of what's around now." He actually directed a screen test for a film called

**Left: The interior of Consec from SCANNERS, Cronenberg's new film being released by Avco-Embassy in January. Consec is a multi-national drug manufacturing company, Cronenberg's metaphor for corporate evil. Right: Cronenberg (right) poses for some gag photos with Joe Silver during filming of RABID (1977), his second low-budget Canadian horror hit.**

**'There's a latin quote that goes, 'Timor mortis conturbat me,' which, roughly translated, means, 'The fear of death disturbs me.' I think that death is the basis of all horror.'**

LOVING AND LAUGHING, but was more interested in selling Cinepix on his own material.

Cronenberg was pushing a script called *ORGY OF THE BLOOD PARASITES*, which combined the sex staple of Cinepix product with the horror themes he was interested in exploring. "I had shown the script to quite a few people," said Cronenberg, "but only John Dunning at Cinepix had any kind of affinity for the subject matter. It was pretty bizarre, but John has a very bizarre sensibility and liked it a lot." Cinepix saw in the property a potential to break into world markets, particularly distribution in the United States, while filming on a low enough budget to recoup their investment in Canada alone, a market that was assured. It still took them two years to raise the needed financing, mostly time spent convincing the Canadian Film Development Corporation, a government bank, to back the project. But the wisdom paid off. As *SHIVERS*, the film became the hit of the 1975 Cannes Film Festival, was sold to over 35 countries, translated into 14 languages, bringing in over \$5 million on a production cost of only \$185,000.

Cinepix hadn't wanted Cronenberg to direct. They felt the project was too important. "But they wanted my script," said Cro-

enberg, "so I attached myself to the script . . . and didn't let go." Cinepix was showing the script around Hollywood in the hopes of attracting a name director. Cronenberg found out what was going on by accident, during a trip to Los Angeles to cast Barbara Steele. He ran into director Jonathan Demme, who began describing a script he'd been offered by Cinepix. "Wait a minute!" exclaimed Cronenberg. "That's *my* movie."

*What was it like, directing your first film?*

It was like being thrown into the ocean and told to swim when you'd never even taken a bath before. I had to really learn fast. It was a 15 day shoot—17 if you count a couple of very soft pick-up days—and I didn't know anything. I didn't know what an A.D. (assistant director) was, or what a production manager or gaffer did. I didn't know any of those terms. Everybody who worked on that film had made more movies than I had, and there I was writing and directing it. I was completely off balance all the way through the shoot in terms of working with professionals, in terms of not knowing what a sound mix or fx track was, and in terms of working with people with temperaments.

Even in terms of composition, it took me several days to really start to get on film what I'd been very easily getting doing *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE*. Because, of course, when it came down to a take I wasn't looking through the lens when it was being shot. The cameraman was. I'd always done that myself. In fact, my first day's rushes on *SHIVERS* were terrible. It was one of the worst days of my life. I thought, "My God, maybe I really can't do this after all."

*How did you ever get past all this?*

By the time I saw the first day's rushes we had already shot two more day's worth of film. Fortunately. And they got better and better each day, so I knew I was advancing. I just learned fast, thank God. Half the time I wasn't sure that I had anything that would add up to a movie.

**S**HIVERS focuses on the inhabitants of the Starliner Towers, an enormous, self-sufficient island apartment complex catering to "the good life," which finds itself being taken over by a form of personality-altering para-

site. Cronenberg shot the film where he lived, at apartment buildings on Nun's Island that are not nearly so isolated as the monolithic tower seen in the film. For the clever opening titles, a slide show of the Starliner tied to a travel agent's hard-sell come-on, Cronenberg had photos of the island retouched to replace rows of townhouses, streets, community buildings, and one of its two apartment towers with greenery. The film was so low-budget that Cronenberg was dependent largely on the good-will of his neighbors. "We put up signs in the elevators asking people to donate their apartments," he said. With little redressing, those apartments served as the film's sets, although a couple of empty rooms were made available for the bloodier scenes.

The pointedness of the cold, urban setting, as parasites rudely disrupt the tidiness and decorum of a way of life seen as sterile and empty, mirrored Cronenberg's feelings about where he lived: he *hated* the place. "Nun's Island is very lifeless and soulless," he said. "It wasn't a community that grew in any organic way. Some company just imposed it, and people were supposed to move in." European critics were especially receptive to this political undercurrent in the film, citing Cronenberg for his condemnation of bourgeoisie lifestyles.

A word about Cronenberg's working methods in general. He is a relatively fast director ("By the time we get to 'take two' I usually know just what it is that I want") who works out his camera moves on the set only after choreographing the dynamics of a scene with his performers. He never storyboards. "My eye for composition is very specific," said Cronenberg. "This is no joke: I feel physically ill when I look through a lens and things aren't properly composed." Without being tyrannical, he frowns on dialogue improvisation. Cronenberg invariably writes his own scripts and doesn't expect an actor to be in a better position than he to know what a character should say in the context of the movie as a whole. Having photographed his first two, non-professional 35mm films, Cronenberg thinks he knows how to light, though he usually leaves that up to his cameraman after working out in advance what the look of the picture should be. "I've never worked with a cameraman who used tons of equipment," said Cronenberg, betraying his low-budget roots. "Having to use a couple of dozen Brute arcs eats up incredible amounts of time, not to mention money."

SHIVERS started with a dream. "A man and woman were lying in bed," said Cronenberg, describing it, "and this *thing*, sort of like a spider, came out of the man's mouth. At first I saw something like a hair. As I watched, it became a leg." Such a scene is in the film (see photo, bottom page 35), though Cronenberg decided not to base the look of his parasites on a spider ("Too difficult to do convincingly"). The parasites seen in the film were the work of Hollywood make-up artist Joe Blasco, once Lawrence Welk's makeup man. As a further irony, Blasco told Cronenberg that years before, while living in Pittsburgh, he had been offered the work on NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD and had turned it down.

"I think a couple of Blasco's effects are as

## STEREO

David Cronenberg filmed STEREO, his first effort in 35mm, in late 1968, early 1969, using \$3,500 in funds provided by the Canada Council, "a big federal grant-giving organization." He applied for financing to write the screenplay, only to learn the bureaucracy hadn't gotten around to supporting filmmakers. He switched his proposal to a novel instead, then took the money to buy raw film stock. With payment deferred on the rental of a 35mm Arriflex from kind-hearted Janet Good of Canadian Motion Picture Equipment Rentals, he was in business.

Cronenberg calls STEREO the "prototype" of SCANNERS, his new film for Avco-Embassy, because both deal with artificially induced telepathy. "In STEREO I was trying to show it would not be terrific to have ESP," said Cronenberg. "Especially if you didn't know how to control it. That's basically the premise of SCANNERS." The title STEREO describes how a telepath perceives the world, as compared to a normal human whose perceptions are only "monaural."

Working with only a premise, Cronenberg defined his characters and basic story outline and then let the film develop during shooting. It concerns six men and women used as guinea pigs. The Northern Institute of Parapsychological Research and the Canadian Academy for Erotic Inquiry want to determine whether telepathy would lead human groups to form a "super-mind" and evolve new modes of political, social and sexual behavior. The subjects are rendered telepathic by a surgical process called "biological induction," and progress of the experiments is documented in reports from a Dr. Stringfellow (Ron Mlodzik).

Using non-professional actors, Cronenberg shot in black & white, without synch sound, adding voice-overs to represent the thoughts and unspoken communication of the telepaths. This gambit was used in part to get around the noisiness of the Arriflex camera. Cronenberg functioned as a one-man crew, edited the footage to 70 minutes and cut the negative himself. "I even carried the camera cases," he laughed.

Cronenberg made STEREO to get exposure at film festivals and entered the feature at both the Edinburgh and Adelaide events in 1969 at his own expense. The idea paid off when the film's experimental, avant-garde approach attracted attention and the interest of a moneyed transportation tycoon who put up \$10,000 to buy the film for distribution through his own International Film Archives of New York. That led to screenings at New York's Museum of Modern Art, press coverage and the money to start a second film. Cronenberg was on his way.

Cronenberg shooting STEREO.



good as anything I've ever seen by anybody," said Cronenberg. The parasites transmit themselves from person to person during sexual contact, which they stimulate by acting as an aphrodisiac. One of Blasco's cleverest effects shows a parasite passing between Barbara Steele and Lynn Lowry during a lesbian kiss. Using makeup appliances to cover balloons on their necks, the throats of the actresses were made to bulge in sequence. As might be expected, elaborate effects on such a low budget caused problems. Mused Cronenberg philosophically, "It doesn't matter who's doing them or how much experience they've had, something always goes wrong."

*What did you call the parasites on the set?*

Bugs. It satisfied me enormously to invent a new creature, you know. The bugs came out of my childhood fascination with the microscopic, with insects and so on. When I grew up most other kids weren't into watching praying mantises eating grasshoppers. To me there was definitely more than just a little beauty in that, just as, visually and intellectually, there are things which you can see under a microscope that are satisfying. But a lot of people don't understand that response. Well, either you have it or you don't.

*How did you design the bugs?*

I went to a medical artist and showed her what I had in mind, drawings of various kinds of real parasites with their little suckers. In fact, during most of the shooting I had a jar of fresh water leeches in my 'fridge which I was also using as part of my design. Then make-up artist Joe Blasco translated the leeches and medical artist's work into a sculpture. The leeches died, unfortunately, when the crew turned up the refrigerator to keep their beer cool. I opened it up one day to find my leeches frozen solid.

*What were the bugs constructed of?*

They were made of foam latex with a spring inside to give them some elasticity. They were often manipulated by mono-filament fishing line. Nothing very elaborate, really. Most of the effects were done by cutting and by the simplest possible techniques, like having a curved, twisted piece of wire stuck inside.

When the bug comes out of Alan Migicovsky's mouth, he was doing the manipulation himself. That was one of the smaller ones; it didn't have a spring in it. I think it was just folded, and he sort of worked it around with his tongue.

Where the bug is sniffing around in the bathtub drain, that was assistant director Danny Goldberg manipulating it underneath the plug. Basically, that was a finger puppet. The tub was acutely a display tub we'd gotten. It was only half a tub, and was leaking water all over the place while we were doing it. I was afraid that it would electrocute us all. That was done in my living room there on Nun's Island, by the way.

**S**HIVERS was cast mainly with Canadians but for two exceptions which Cronenberg included with an eye toward the horror genre. He had seen Lynn Lowry in George Romero's THE CRAZIES, and though he didn't like the film ("Very hysterical and uncontrolled"), he cast Lowry, a thin, fragile





blonde with haunting eyes, because of her strange screen presence. The other was Barbara Steele, queen of Italian horror films, who was brought in for three days work.

Steele objected to the filming of a nude scene required in the script, a bathtub shot which suggests her violation by an enterprising parasite which crawls up through the drain and jumps between her legs. She acquiesced only after Cronenberg agreed to let her wear a transparent body stocking for the shot. She was also quite nervous about the film's climactic swimming pool scene involving forty-five extras, because of Cronenberg's inexperience as a director. "Quite rightly," admitted Cronenberg. "I had never worked with extras before, let alone a crowd scene. It was too uncontrolled. She could have drowned if the extras had overreacted to my direction to leap on each other and pull each other down. She knew better than I did that a lot of people who show up again and again as extras are quite nuts! It was scary. That's yet another illustration of the fact that this film was my baptism of fire."

Cronenberg felt his original title, *ORGY OF THE BLOOD PARASITES*, was a bit too redolent of the '50s horror films on which he grew up, sounding perhaps like a send-up, so the title was switched to *THE PARASITE MURDERS* for Canadian release. A French language version was released simultaneously under the title *FRISSONS*, meaning "shudders" or "shivers." When it was discovered in Montreal that the French version was far more successful, the English title was switched to *SHIVERS*, which is how the film was sold throughout the world. Except, of course, in the United States, where AIP came up with the title *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*, just as evocative of '50s horror as the one Cronenberg originally wanted, but without the satiric overtones.

The U.S. release was a big disappointment to the director, beginning with censorship and running the gamut all the way to bad prints and lackluster distribution. The cuts, which were slight and kept the film from garnering an X-rating, included a shot of Alan Migicovsky pulling off the parasites latched onto Joe Silver's face and stuffing them into his own mouth. "He's not eating them," said Cronenberg. "They're just his boys and he wants them back."

An example from *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*, better known as *SHIVERS*, of what happens when Cronenberg calls for "More blood!" on the set. Using vice grips, Joe Silver tries to pry loose the parasites that have latched onto his face (left), after he has gotten a bit too close to inspecting their exit, via acidic secretions, from Alan Migicovsky's stomach (right).

**'One of the reasons people like to see my movies is that they expect that I will go further than they would. It's part of my relationship with my audience, the old 'astonish me' gambit.'**

There's a poster on the wall of a doctor's office at the beginning of *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN* that reads "Sex is the invention of a clever venereal disease." It's Cronenberg's witty allusion to the way in which his parasites use sex to spread like a plague among the inhabitants of Starliner Towers. The film ends on a note of exuberance, as the infected apartment dwellers gayly drive away from the Starliner, out into the world, Cronenberg's vision of a randy apocalypse. The picture got labeled the first "venereal horror film," and was savaged by critics like Robin Wood, who saw its subject matter as "sexual disgust." A virulent attack written by Robert Fulford in *Saturday Night*, a magazine for the Canadian intelligentsia, turned Cronenberg and his film into a *cause celebre* when it questioned the use of public funds, financing provided by the Canadian Film Development Corporation, to make such a film.

*Were you surprised by the controversy your film stirred up?*

Yes, I was surprised. People were raising their fists and shouting at each other in the Houses of Parliament, "Why is the taxpayer's money being put into such filth?" This was being said by people who hadn't seen the film, of course. Fulford called it the most

perverse, despicable film he'd ever seen in his life. He just went on and on and said that if we had to make films like this in Canada to establish a film industry, then it would be better not to make any films at all. At the Secretary of State Department, which deals with cultural affairs like cinema, ballet and theater, I was told that for days everybody was mumbling in the hallways, "What are we going to do about Cronenberg?"

*You have to admit there are certain elements in the film that aren't exactly in the perfumed chambers of good taste.*

Well, that's certainly true. Even I believe there's a point past which you start losing vast segments of your audience by being too extreme. Then again, one of the reasons people like to see my movies is that they expect that I will go farther than they would. It's part of my relationship with my audience, the old, you know, "astonish me" gambit. We're talking about grossness, but that's the same thing. It's, "Astonish me! Show me things that I never imagined. Things that even in my worst or most brilliant thoughts I couldn't imagine." Anyway, I think an artist is supposed to be extreme.

Fulford's article had given Cronenberg and his first film more publicity than he could have hoped to buy. On the other hand, *SHIVERS* wasn't even considered for screening at 1975's Canadian Film Awards, and its notoriety made members of the Canadian Film Development Corporation, who were taking considerable heat for backing the film, cringe at the mention of Cronenberg's name. Cinepix was trying to put together the financing for Cronenberg's next film, *RABID*, but the CFDC just didn't want to know about it. Cronenberg bided his time by writing a stage show for magician Doug Henning called "Spellbound," which fictionalized the performer's magic act by inserting it into a plot with characters and all the trappings of a play. The work came Cronenberg's way because one of the producers of the show, Ivan Reitman, was also one of the principals at Cinepix. Reitman, too, had got his start directing schlock horror on a shoestring—*CANNIBAL GIRLS* in 1973—but found that he was much better at producing than directing. He went on to do such films as

ANIMAL HOUSE and, this year, MEAT-BALLS. The CFDC eventually came around to the idea of backing RABID, after Cronenberg's first film had become such a phenomenal financial success that it vindicated their involvement: it proved to be one of the few films they backed which ever showed a profit.

RABID stars Marilyn Chambers as a motorcyclist rebuilt by a plastic surgeon after a near-fatal accident, who finds that the operation has left her with an unexpected side-effect, an appetite for blood and a phallic syringe which pops out of her armpit to drain her victims. Cronenberg had written the script years earlier under the title MOSQUITO in about six days, out of frustration because ORGY OF THE BLOOD PARASITES wasn't getting off the ground. It had undergone a lot of changes in the meantime, but the central concept had remained intact: the bite of the bloodsucker played by Chambers spreads a deadly form of rabies.

Cronenberg had sent the script off to John Dunning at Cinepix just to have something to talk about while his first project was stalled. "Dunning loved the central idea," said Cronenberg. "I kept telling him, 'But John, the central idea is quite absurd.' And he would say, 'No, no. There's something about it...' I knew it was going to be one hell of a challenge to make people believe that premise. I like to show people something absolutely amazing and make them believe it by the time the film is finished."

But audiences weren't so convinced this time around, mainly because Cronenberg cut out ten seconds of dialogue that explained why Chambers had such a strange armpit. An explanation can still be heard during Chambers' operation, couched in technical jargon no one pays attention to because the scene is so interesting. Not that you'd understand it, anyway. The surgeon is explaining the new process he's using in terms of *morphogenetic field theory*. Cronenberg, sort of a lapsed scientist himself, likes to dream up this kind of pseudo-scientific rationale for his plots. His scientist had devised a technique to render tissue morphogenetically neutral, like the cells of an undifferentiated embryo, so that when grafted to any part of the body, like embryonic tissue, it would read the genetic code of its position and grow into whatever was supposed to be there. The bit of dialogue Cronenberg cut out which leaves audiences bewildered is spoken by the surgeon later in the film as he's about to be done-in by Chambers. He very simply explains to her how he thought this new tissue was going to grow her the new intestines she needed to survive, but that it decided to do something else instead. Cronenberg made the cut because the dialogue broke the tension that was building in the scene. "It was a mistake," he admitted. "It would have provided a simple rationale in terms that people could understand. Even those who liked the movie have asked, 'But what was that thing? Who was that masked organ?'"

*One of the themes that keeps running through your scripts is somewhat aligned to the old "mad scientist" cliché, professionals who somehow become blinded by ambition.*

*People of incredible power and charisma and intellect appeal to me as main characters*

## THE BROOD

Samantha Eggar giving birth to one of "the brood," shown right, is an example of the remarkable images that regularly distinguish David Cronenberg's strikingly original work in the horror field. This climactic view of Eggar's external womb in THE BROOD (1979) is surprising and shocking and beautiful, all at the same time. "The visual image for this scene crystallized for me in sort of a waking dream," said Cronenberg. "It didn't come from sleep. It came from whatever unconscious place these images arise."

Special effects make-up artist Dennis Pike made the external womb by using a section of weather balloon. A synthetic outer skin gave it a shriveled, organic look. Pike filled the balloon with studio blood and spaghetti and his model baby. The balloon was needed to contain the considerable weight and pressure of the womb ingredients. Eggar had a small piece of an Exacto knife glued to her finger so that she could make a small incision during the scene in which she bites the womb open. For all that attention to detail, the biting was censored in Canada, and still other parts are missing from the U.S. version.

"I had a long and loving close-up of Eggar licking the fetus that was quite fantastic," said Cronenberg. "I really regret that it's not in any final version of the film. The ironic thing is that when the censors, those animals, cut it out, the result was that a lot of people thought she was eating the baby! That's much worse than what I was suggesting. What we're talking about here is an image that is not sexual, not violent, just gooey, gooey and disturbing. It's a bitch licking her pups. Why cut it out? I really resent the inability of the censors and the rating boards to come to terms with something like this."

Cronenberg tried to get midgets to play the brood creatures seen in the film, but after finding only two, one locally and Felix Silla from Hollywood who plays Twiki on BUCK ROGERS, he gave up and hired 10 seven-year-old girls, gymnasts from a school in Mississauga, Ontario, to fill out the compliment of 12 needed. The girls were just old enough to sit still for the three hours required for make-up artist Jack Young, shown below, to apply their latex masks, wigs and body humps. It is the young gymnasts who are seen jumping all over poor Oliver Reed at the end of the film, trying to rip out his throat. Newspaper reports indicated the kids had a great time during filming and were disappointed when they were prevented from seeing the R-rated film.

A gymnast turns into one of the brood creatures.



in a film, just as they do in life. When I'm delineating their downfall, I'm really referring to a much larger canvas. I mean, we are all trying to deal with life. We all are trying to make sense out of the world, trying to cope with it and, hopefully, make something creative out of it. I feel a lot of empathy for doctors and scientists. In fact, I often feel that they are my persona in the film. In another way, everybody's a mad scientist, and life is their lab. We're all trying to experiment to find a way to live, to solve problems, to send off madness and send off chaos. So to me those characters really represent people in general, who somehow have to figure out what they're doing, what their worth means, what their relationship to society is, how to use their creative energy and how to deal with their destructive energy.

*Are you resurrecting that old "there are some things man is not meant to know" cliché?*

You have to believe in God before you can say that there are things that man was not meant to know. I don't think there's anything that man was not meant to know. I just think there are some stupid things that people shouldn't do. When you believe that there's a certain order and law in the universe that affects man, then you can believe that stuff. I don't happen to believe that, so it's hard for me to take it seriously.

Although my scientists may be tragic and demented, I don't subscribe that they're playing with things that shouldn't be played with. "There are things man is not meant to know" just doesn't wash for me.

Cronenberg picked Rose as the name of the character played by Marilyn Chambers in RABID as a metaphor for her innocence. Forced by her nature to live on blood, Rose is not evil, and seems to think she can get away with what she has to do to live by just taking a little bit of blood from everyone. Cronenberg shows her attempt to suck blood from a cow to avoid preying on people, only to discover that animal blood causes her to be sick. Cronenberg makes the scene a bizarre joke by composing it like a pastoral Rembrandt tableau, with bushel baskets of carrots and potatoes and just the right rustic icons, all very beautifully lit.

Playing with the idea of vampirism as a sexual metaphor, as is traditional, Cronenberg nearly always has Rose getting her blood after a sexual come-on. This led to charges by some critics that the film was sexist because it depicted female sexuality as predatory in nature. Today critics label the proliferation of stalk-and-slash psycho horror films as sexist for precisely the opposite reason, because they show women as victims. "So what?" said Cronenberg, showing his irritation at such charges. "Someone who writes an a-sexist tract is not going to write a great anything. If you start to write something and have a list of the people you don't want to offend, you're going to be paralyzed. There's a group to object to every facet of every film. That's for sure."

Cronenberg had wanted to cast Sissy Spacek in the Chamber's role, after seeing her in BADLANDS. One of his producers nixed the idea saying, "She's got too many freckles!" Two months later Spacek was off the





cover of *Newsweek* for CARRIE. "Too bad," mused Cronenberg.

The casting of Chambers for RABID, her first non-porno role, brought the production a good deal of publicity and notoriety. When Cronenberg's landlady, a Protestant spinster of 80 who thought he looked like a clean-cut young lad, read in the newspaper that he was making a film with Marilyn Chambers, she had him thrown out of his flat. Feeling vulnerable, Cronenberg bought his first house—right across the street.

Chambers was accompanied on the film by Chuck Traynor, her manager/husband, painted as such a horrible figure by Linda Lovelace in her recent book, *Ordeal*. "He had the presence of a movie heavy," confirmed Cronenberg. "He's not my kind of guy, exactly. They were both into trading gold-plated revolvers with Sammy Davis, Jr., that sort of thing. It is a world I must say is totally foreign to me. It's not one I think I'll ever get to know too well."

RABID was made in 1977, on a five week schedule in Montreal, budgeted at \$530,000. Cronenberg's control over his medium noticeably improved, thanks to the additional time and money he was given to work with. More polished than *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*, the film is primarily an exercise in action and suspense, lacking the kind of personal statements that gave his first film much of its impact. Commercially, it was another huge success for Cronenberg, garnering the second highest sales figure of any film at the 1977 Cannes Film Festival. Roger Corman's New World Pictures picked up the film for U.S. release, where it had to be trimmed slightly to avoid an X-rating. "The cuts were so slight," said Cronenberg, "I can't even remember what was taken out." RABID's box-office success gave Cronenberg the distinction of being the only director to place two films on the list of the top 10 money-making Canadian films of all time.

*What are you trying to say to your audience?*

You may not believe this, but it's real. I like to say that. I like to say, during the course of my film, I'm going to show you something that you're not able to believe, because it'll be so outrageous or ridiculous or bizarre. But I'm going to make it *real* for you. I'm going to show you, *this is for real*.

*You've been influenced by surrealism.*

I don't know if it's an influence or if I and the surrealists are both going to the same source. I have a feeling it's more like the latter. I studied Andre Breton and Dali and the surrealist movement at university, but I wouldn't say it was an influence.

*What about filmic influences?*

I sort of come from a New York underground film background, which means those long and obscure art films. Things like Ed Emshwiller's *RELATIVITY*, Kenneth Anger's work and Andy Warhol, who will do long shots for humorous effect. But though I liked these films I don't think they overly influenced my own work.

*Have any horror directors influenced you?*

I was very affected by Nicolas Roeg's *DON'T LOOK NOW*. As a film, as a story—just totally affected. The technique used in that film featured a lot of tricks you just don't think of using. Despite that, I wouldn't use those tricks myself. There are a lot of direc-

## RABID

Bizarre, disturbing images are the root of David Cronenberg's effectiveness in the horror field. A frozen nurse, shown *left*, one of Marilyn Chambers' victims found inside a hospital refrigerator, became the key image of RABID's advertising campaign. This 1977 film went on to make \$7 million on a production investment of little more than \$500,000, providing Cronenberg with an impressive track record after just two pictures, and making him the most bankable director in Canada—as long as he stuck to horror. *FAST COMPANY*, a racing film Cronenberg made after RABID, failed to find a U.S. distributor until recently.

RABID is Cronenberg's unique slant on the vampire genre. Marilyn Chambers plays the innocent victim of a new surgical technique which causes her to develop a retractable, syringe-like organ in her armpit, shown *inset top*, used to obtain the fresh human blood she needs to stay alive. Make-up artist Joe Blasco devised the effect and sculpted and molded the needed appliances for Chambers in Hollywood; they were attached during filming by Byrd Holland in Toronto. For closeups, Blasco made a false chest, including a mound of puckered tissue for the organ to slide in and out of, manipulated off-camera from behind. For long shots, a simpler appliance of the organ in its "out" position was used.

Blasco also designed the effect for one of Cronenberg's cleverest sequences in the film, when a plastic surgeon goes berserk after being infected by Chambers and slices off the index finger of a nurse right in the middle of an operation, shown *inset middle*. The scene nicely touches upon a primal fear of being helpless during an operation. "I watched a plastic surgeon at work for three hours in preparation for that scene," said Cronenberg. "If this wasn't for publication, I could tell you a lot of funny stories about that experience."

Like a vampire bat, attacks by Chambers begin to spread a dread form of rabies, causing people to foam at the mouth and attack others, shown *inset bottom*. "That was a very simple effect," laughed Cronenberg. "We used Bromo Seltzer. It foams and fizzes. We just added a little vegetable coloring."

"I must tell you though," he added, "it was very interesting to see the psychological reaction of the actors, especially the extras, when we asked them to put this stuff in their mouths! A lot of people just couldn't allow themselves to let this stuff dribble out over their clothes, even though it wasn't their clothes, it was *our* clothes. We had dozens of those incidents."

Cronenberg directs Marilyn Chambers.



tors I admire, that I'm interested in. But, I'm merely *interested*, as opposed to all those people who are obsessed with Hawks and Hitchcock. There's no equivalent for that kind of influence on me.

There was a period when I felt that I couldn't write anything but bad Nabokov imitations, since he was, in a sense, my literary idol. But this predates my screenplays. That's a traditional stage for writers to go through, when they're looking for their own voice and they're so much under the spell of someone else. I also went through a stage I call my *Evergreen Review* period, where I was influenced by writers like Burroughs. Does this carry over to my scripts? It must.

*The fact that you don't mirror other filmmakers, is that because you missed the film school experience and began making pictures at a more mature age?*

I think so. I didn't take film seriously at first. It wasn't *the* profession. It wasn't something that I always wanted to do. It certainly wasn't something that I ever studied. You see, there's quite a difference between how I got into the film business and how the guys who went to UCLA to study movies got into it. They had the weight of film history on their backs. First, because they're Americans, and second, because they were scholars before they were artists. I think that's always a very difficult way in which to do it. I came from the other direction completely. For me filmmaking was a breath of fresh air.

**F**ollowing RABID, Cronenberg directed his first non-genre film in the summer of 1977, *FAST COMPANY*, about an all-star drag-racer played by William Smith who locks horns with an immoral oil company executive played by John Saxon. "It's a modern western," said Cronenberg, "sort of a shoot-out on the drag strip." The project was the first film he hadn't scripted himself, though he ended up reworking most of the dialogue and expanding the climax. Cronenberg is, by the way, a collector of cars and motorcycles who thoroughly enjoys sports car racing, which may explain his attraction to the material. The importance of *FAST COMPANY* is that it brought together the crew, including art director Carol Spier and cinematographer Mark Irwin, that Cronenberg used again to film *THE BROOD* and *SCANNERS*. This production unit has the reputation of being the best in Canada and is even identified as "Cronenberg's crew" when working for other directors.

Around this time, Cronenberg made a foray into television, working for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He directed two shows on videotape, *THE VICTIM*, about an obscene phone-caller who gets the tables turned on him, and *THE LIE CHAIR*, about a stranded motorist who seeks shelter at night in the home of two old ladies and becomes possessed by the spirit of their missing boy. "a conventional ghost story," said Cronenberg. He wrote and directed a third show on film, *THE ITALIAN MACHINE*, about a group of bike freaks obsessed with an Italian motorcycle owned by a wealthy collector who has no appreciation of it.

Cronenberg severed his ties with Cinepix, the company that produced his first two horror films, for the backing of Canada's Mutual

Films in association with Filmplan, a production entity formed by Pierre David and Victor Solnicki. After dipping into the funds of a willing Canadian Film Development Corporation, they provided Cronenberg with a budget of \$1.5 million for his next film, *THE BROOD*, his most mature work. The film quietly pummels the mind and emotions rather than attacking the nerves, as a murderous group of unusual children systematically slaughter the members of one particular family.

Cronenberg's script introduces us to the Somafree Institute of Psychoplasmics, run by another one of his non-stereotypical "mad scientists" played by Oliver Reed, who has written a book called *The Shape of Rage*. Psychoplasmics seems like a sinister version of heightened-awareness movements like est, and Reed's book looks like any number of self-help titles that have proliferated in the publishing field. We get a brief, tantalizing look at the book's cover on a poster in Reed's office, designed by art director Carol Spier, of a fist that turns into a screaming mouth and explodes. Cronenberg's feel for the jargon of pop psychiatry is convincing and satirical at the same time.

"I'd love to write *The Shape of Rage*," laughed Cronenberg. "I'm sure it would be a big best seller. Like I've always said, if I don't make it in the film business, I can always open a Psychoplasmics clinic north of Los Angeles."

One of Reed's patients in the film points to a monstrous growth of lymphosarcoma cancer on his neck, saying "I've got a small revolution on my hands, and I'm not putting it down very successfully." After an hour, we see the autopsy of one of the gnarled, humped-back, androgynous "brood creatures" that have been causing all the mayhem, and feeling as frustrated as the film's protagonist in understanding what the hell's going on, we begin to wonder whether Cronenberg's ever going to be able to tie together all of the tantalizing loose ends he's having so much fun unravelling. But come together it does, in a remarkable conclusion in which Samantha Eggar, Reed's star patient, majestically spreads out her arm to uplift her gown and reveal the brood fetuses growing in cancerous sacs on her body.

*THE BROOD* sort of crystallized an overriding concern that is examined in virtually all of Cronenberg's films: the seeming split between mind and body first explored by the philosopher Descartes. Is mind the master? Is the body to be mistrusted? Joe Silver, playing a doctor in *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*, says that man is an over-rational animal that's lost touch with its body. Balancing the purity of thought against the treachery of flesh—this is Cronenberg's overwhelming fixation.

*Your work was highly influenced by the death of your father, wasn't it?*

My father's death highly influenced me. After he died I felt quite haunted. I really understood what haunting was all about. I would hear phrases and words that he would use and it felt like if I just turned around he would be there. These phrases were usually nothing particularly significant, just things that would float to the surface.

*You must have been very close.*

## CRIMES OF THE FUTURE

With a \$5000 advance from International Film Archives of New York, the company that bought his first feature, and an additional \$15,000 subsidy from the Canadian Film Development Corporation, Cronenberg filmed *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE* in late 1969, early 1970 in 35mm color and sync sound, using many of the same actors from *STEREO*. As before, Cronenberg wrote, produced, directed, photographed and edited the film himself. "Making films this way was kind of lonely," he observed. "It was as close to cinematic poetry as you could get."

Cronenberg's 65-minute film posits a future in which women of child-bearing age have succumbed to an airborne contagion triggered by additives in cosmetics. The malady causes people to bleed strangely-colored fluids from their eyes and noses, leading those around them to sniff, lick and devour the effluent. Cronenberg used chocolate syrup for the effect. The "crimes" of the title refer to perversions like foot and lingerie fetishism engaged in by the remaining male population. Cults spring up around the few young female children who survive. One such, played by five-year-old Tania Zolty, is kidnapped from the House of Skin, a dermatological institute seeking a cure for the disease, by a group of heterosexual paedophiles intent on impregnating her. The film follows an agent for the institute, played by Don Owen, a filmmaker and friend of Cronenberg's, as he journeys through the strange sub-cultures of the society in search of the missing girl.

Although Cronenberg employs some inventive camera techniques in the film, including hand-held shots and scenes where he moved the camera around on a wheelchair, *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE*, like *STEREO*, consists predominantly of lengthy, static camera set-ups which use the film frame as proscenium. "I would imagine a double billing of those two would take a lot of sitting through," laughed Cronenberg, who hasn't seen either film in seven years. "The direction I was taking came from the New York underground and a tradition of long and obscure art films," he said. "I had to experiment and try that approach in order to grow. But *STEREO* and *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE* proved to be a dead end for me. I decided I didn't really want to make another film like them."

Scenes from *CRIMES OF THE FUTURE*.



Yeah, we were. After he died, I would wake up in the morning and feel that I was him. I sat up in bed the way he did. It was very eerie. My wife was seeing that I was standing the way he stood or sitting in a posture he used to attain. In a way, I guess, it was partly my attempt to deny he was dead. To kind of become him. In that sense, and it's a very psychological sense, I think I obtained an insight into the beliefs of reincarnation and possession. I don't really believe in an after-life in the more mystical sense, however.

*How did his passing affect your work?*

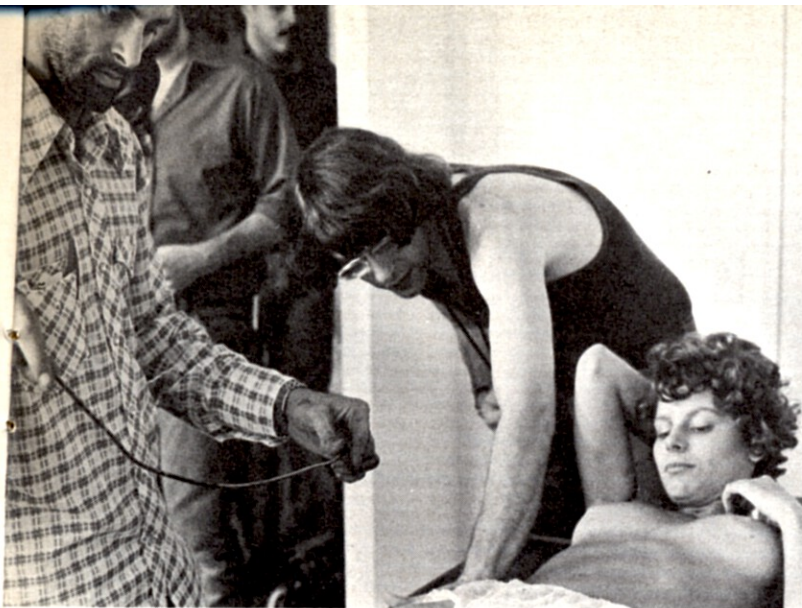
My father was a very intelligent, very sweet man who started to die physically but not mentally. The body went, but the mind didn't. It was a very non-specific disease. It started as colitis and became a very bizarre inability of his body to process calcium. His bones started to become brittle. He would turn over in bed and break ribs. It was quite horrible.

People ask me, why horror? Well, this is the serious part of it, which I'm not pushing on anyone. You look at yourself in the mirror and you see that you're dying. Your mind says, "Wait a minute. Why is this happening?" Your mind and body are so separated, it's an almost incomprehensible horror. I think only when you somehow have philosophically united your body with the rest of you can something like death become acceptable. I can't say that I've done it myself.

Cronenberg agrees with critics who have called *THE BROOD* his finest film. "It was certainly my most cathartically satisfying project," he said. "I'm very fond of it. It feels right that it should be my most mature work, because I certainly felt poised and in control when I was making it. It insisted on being made in a very personal way. Almost *too* personal, as a matter of fact. It's as close to autobiography as I've ever come, and I hope I don't come that close again."

It might sound strange to hear Cronenberg describe his most bizarre horror film as *autobiographical*, but *THE BROOD* represents the nightmare side of some very specific real events in his life. Cronenberg wrote *THE BROOD* over a period of years, a tortuous time for him involving divorce from his first wife and a custody battle for his young daughter. The script evolved through five drafts as Cronenberg's personal life shaped his writing. Cronenberg is, of course, the protagonist of the film played by Art Hindle, a father who is trying to get his little girl away from the clutches of a very sick mother, played by Eggar. The mother is ultimately destroyed in the process. "I can't tell you how satisfying that scene is," said Cronenberg. "I wanted to strangle my ex-wife."

Cronenberg had set out to write *SCANNERS*, but the script kept coming out *THE BROOD* instead, as his typewriter helped exorcise personal demons. To one extent or another, there are elements of Cronenberg in all the script's characters. He finally went to his producers and said, "Look, I've got a script that isn't anything like what we talked about. I didn't mean this to happen, but I can't stop it. So if you want to cancel the project and take your money back, that's alright." They read the script instead, and were delighted.



**Left: THE CAME FROM WITHIN (1975) opens with an unorthodox experimenter making a scalpel incision on one of his female guinea pigs, releasing one of Cronenberg's bizarre biological horrors on the world. Cronenberg sets up the effect with make-up man Joe Blasco (left). Right: Robert Silverman as the lymphoma cancer patient from THE BROOD (1979).**

With the hefty budget Cronenberg had on *THE BROOD*, larger by more than \$1 million from what he had to work with at Cinepix, he hired himself some top-notch acting talent. Samantha Eggar gives a stunning performance as Nola Carveth, the brood mother, sedentary for most of the film's length but called on to display an amazing range of emotions. "She told me the script reminded her of things from her own childhood," said Cronenberg. "She never got more specific than that."

To play his psychoplasms guru, Dr. Raglan, Cronenberg managed the coup of getting Oliver Reed and holding him down to a subtle, restrained performance. By the end of the film Reed has run the gamut from a heavy to an ennobled tragic hero. "He loved the script," said Cronenberg. "He said it was the best thing he'd read since *THE DEVILS*."

*THE BROOD* is unusual among Cronenberg's films for its small, intimate cast and its nicely sustained melancholy mood. Poetic touches like a long shot of two brood children walking with Carveth's daughter, hand in hand, down the road in snow are contrasted with scenes of her kidnapping from school where the homicidal brood children in their vari-colored snowsuits look like the hideous red-coated dwarf from *DON'T LOOK NOW*. In a nice, appropriate touch, Cronenberg names it the *Krell* school. "I hadn't realized the film had a similar premise to *FORBIDDEN PLANET* until I picked that name for the school," he said. "Then I made the connection: creatures from the unconscious, making the mental, physical. That's what *THE BROOD* and *FORBIDDEN PLANET* are really about. I was really knocked out by that film as a kid."

*Why are the brood creatures sexless?*

My general feeling was that the kind of rage Nola [Samantha Eggar] had was sort of an all-purpose one—sort of genderless. Her rage goes beyond certain mortal categories, so the resultant creatures were primal, nearly fetal, nearly formless. Just pure anger.

*Some critics thought that during the autopsy scene, you held the gaze of the camera a bit too lingeringly on the dead creature.*

I don't know. I sort of liked that.

*Was that a person in a suit on the table?*

**'Most people have an understanding of what a horror film is, namely that it is emotionally juvenile, ignorant, supremely non-intellectual and dumb. You know, just basically stupid.'**

No, but I'm delighted that you thought it might be. It had been built. It was a dummy. It's really hard to make a body. The reason the scene is sort of purplish-lit is because we had a lot of trouble with it. I didn't want to use a midget on a table because it wouldn't have been strange enough. We tried to make a body from the skeleton on up and it was only partially successful. Beyond the point you saw it just didn't hold up, which was too bad, because I really wanted it to be turned over and looked at.

*Not only do I remember the lurid lighting at that point, but that you also filmed it with a lot of tracking shots.*

In response to the people who say we see too much of that creature, all I can say is I really wanted to show a lot more. But it wouldn't have stood up to any closer examination as a special effect. We had a couple of those autopsy creatures built, and the one by Dennis Pike was by far the best version. Dennis also did the baby that's born, that Samantha Eggar licks clean.

**T**HE *BROOD* is not a childish horror film, and one of Cronenberg's aims was to reach an audience he hadn't touched before. Said Cronenberg, "Most people have a certain understanding

of what a horror film is, namely, that it is emotionally juvenile, ignorant, supremely non-intellectual and dumb. You know, just basically stupid. When people like that see *THE BROOD*, they are impressed that the film's not what they've come to expect." Cronenberg was extremely disappointed with the way New World Pictures sold the film in the United States, an unsophisticated exploitation campaign aimed at their traditional drive-in market that pushed it like any other B-horror film, missing completely the broader audience the film deserved. That disappointment led Filmplan, Cronenberg's producer, to forge sounder distribution ties with a major company like Avco-Embassy for the release of his new film, *SCANNERS*. Avco had demonstrated with filmmakers like John Carpenter that they could reach a broad-based horror film audience.

*SCANNERS* is Cronenberg's closest film to "pure" science fiction, dealing with the struggle of a telepathic minority gone underground in an attempt to control their own superior capabilities, torn between various groups who are trying to exploit their powers. If that sounds like Brian DePalma's *THE FURY*—and both films have their exploding heads—the points of comparison are strictly superficial. *SCANNERS* actually bears a greater similarity to *CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED*, where telepathically gifted kids try to band together to protect themselves from government manipulation, though Cronenberg is totally unfamiliar with that film. For Cronenberg, the roots of *SCANNERS* began with *STEREO*, his first 35mm underground feature made in the late '60s [see sidebar page 24].

"The idea's been percolating in my head for the last 10 years," said Cronenberg. He actually did a script in the early '70s, when he was trying to break into film professionally, called *TELEPATHY 2000*, which used some of the same premises as *SCANNERS*, including artificially created telepaths, and an underground group that's spearheaded by a charismatic leader. "A friend of mine took it to Roger Corman," said Cronenberg. "Nothing happened with it, though *DEATH RACE 2000* did come out after that." Cronenberg began his first drafts as *THE SENSITIVES* until he hit on the idea of calling his telepaths "Scanners," a name

they might assume themselves to disassociate from the mainstream, and a term that could also be used to refer to mind reading, as "scanning." Cronenberg had read Philip K. Dick's book *A Scanner Darkly*, which doesn't use the term in quite the same way, and after some research also found that it referred to data-reading light pens attached to computerized cash registers and was the name of a magazine for computer programmers. It made for a catchy title.

Because the production deal for SCANNERS came together more quickly than anticipated, Cronenberg found himself in a bit of a scheduling bind. Although his producers had come up with a budget of \$4.5 million, his biggest yet, he was given only three weeks to finish the final script, and barely two weeks more for preproduction work. As a result, SCANNERS began shooting before the script was in its final form, putting Cronenberg under the pressure of constant rewrites during production. "I, and my producers, were really walking the tight-rope together," said Cronenberg. "There was a time when no one knew what was going on. Times when everyone went to lunch and I wrote the scene that was coming up. Naturally, the actors were very insecure about all this, as well they should be."

Jennifer O'Neill was surprised to find that the name of her character changed, from Flavia to Kim, during shooting. O'Neill does little more than fill out that loveable filmic convention, *The Girl*, but does appear in one interesting scene, set in a doctor's office, where she is being powerfully "scanned" by an unborn infant.

*What do you think about real manifestations of telepathy that we can now point to with some assurance, experiments like reading Rhine cards and so forth?*

If all telepathy is, is reading cards, then that's boring. Real boring. It's like the question of God. The real question has never been the existence of God, but rather, the nature of God. If God is a totally abstract force in the universe with no care or understanding for human beings, then it really doesn't matter. It's only if God is interested in the affairs of man and cares what you morally do that it makes any difference.

The same thing goes for telepathy. If I say telepathy doesn't exist right now in such a way as to interest me, then that's why I have to invent my own telepathic interests. And if someone's talking to me about telekinesis, I say, "Ok, lift that TV set right off the ground. Right now. Right in front of me." If all you can do is sort of wrestle a piece of paper across the floor, then I'm not interested. There isn't enough power there to make any difference.

Co-star Patrick McGoohan was a trifle more upset than O'Neill by all the last-minute script changes, constantly ranting and raving that he didn't understand what was going on. McGoohan plays the sinister Dr. Ruth, head of Consec, a corporation seeking to locate and exploit the Scanners. But Cronenberg eventually brought the script, and the film, under control, and even McGoohan's anger and insecurity about doing scenes that had only been written the day before changed to a grudging admiration for the director who

## SCANNERS

Like his earlier work, Cronenberg's new film for Avco-Embassy, SCANNERS, opening at theaters in January, features set-pieces involving elaborate makeup effects. One of the most startling is an exploding head seen early in the picture, shown **far right**, which establishes the telepathic powers of the "Scanners," an ESP underground.

"The make-up guys really surprised me," laughed Cronenberg. "I came back to my apartment one night, and here was this head sitting on the table! It was so *life-like*. It was soft to the touch and dented just like real flesh when you touched it. It was the most realistic head possible. I knew right then that this was the one I wanted."

Cronenberg had already blown up a number of heads for the shot without getting the realism he was seeking: he tried heads made of plaster, heads made of wax, heads made of gelatin, but nothing worked. "One of those we weren't happy with you actually ran a still of [10:1:35]," he said. "That was the waxy one. It produced too much smoke, and it sort of vaporized after the first couple of frames. It looked like a pumpkin!"

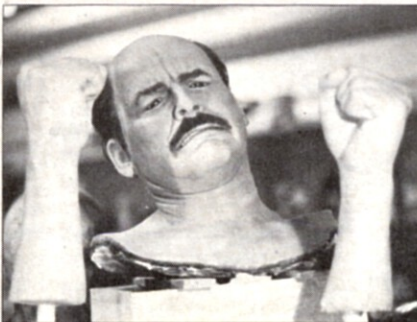
The remarkably life-like head seen in the final film was created by Chris Walas, currently employed on special projects at Lucasfilm Ltd., in collaboration with Montreal make-up artist Stephen Dupuis, assisted by Tom Schwartz. They also created life-like hands, shown **below**, for the dummy which stands in for Del Grande during the explosion. Effects man Gary Zeller exploded the head by shooting it with a S.W.A.T.-team shotgun like those seen in the film.

"Gary was shooting from behind and at an upward angle," explained Cronenberg. "When the blast hits the head, the face comes inside out and sort of swings down under the neck. Then the body slumps down under the table. It's an incredible shot. Incredibly gruesome, but also quite beautiful. It's so surreal that it's also quite lovely in its own way."

Cronenberg's producers were alarmed by the effectiveness of the shot when they saw the rushes, and wanted to film less graphic takes as insurance. "I said, 'Sure, go ahead.' They shot three more heads blowing up in various ways, but I wasn't there to watch them. I just went back to my Winnebago and took a nap. It's the first time I've ever done something like that. But I wasn't interested. I had the one I wanted."

The scene has such impact that it puts audiences on edge for the rest of the picture—just what Cronenberg had in mind.

Casting the face used for the exploding head.



was on the hot seat. "At one point he said he wished he'd had me around when he was doing *THE PRISONER*," said Cronenberg. "That was quite a compliment."

Michael Ironside plays Revok, leader of the Scanner underground and one of the most charismatic characters in Cronenberg's *oeuvre*, a terrifically magnetic screen psychopath. Indeed, insanity has never been more rampant in a Cronenberg film. Nearly all of SCANNERS' principals are right over the edge. Cronenberg cast a newcomer, Stephen Lack, as Cameron Vale, the Scanner who is caught in the middle, used by Dr. Ruth and Consec to seek out members of Revok's underground. Lack's inexperience shows up to the film's detriment. "I cast him primarily because of his eyes," said Cronenberg. "They're translucent, a sort of icy blue. You feel as though you're looking right through them, directly into his brain. I thought that if a Scanner was going to have any physical property, that would be one of them."

Lack had made a name for himself in a Canadian underground film called *THE RUBBER GUN*, playing a character very much like himself, but when it came to playing Vale, he didn't know how to use his voice, how to walk or how to play for the camera. "But Lack learned," said Cronenberg of his performance in the film. "He has a lot of potential, and he had the will to learn." Robert Silverman (who played the lymphosarcoma cancer patient in *THE BROOD*) plays Pierce, the Scanner sculptor that Vale seeks to use to infiltrate the Scanner underground. "It's my art that keeps me sane," says Pierce in the film, and by the way he says it, you understand that he's quite mad. Pierce was originally the central character in early drafts of Cronenberg's SCANNERS screenplay.

Art director Carol Spier found Tom Coulter, a Montreal artist, to create the bizarre sculptures seen in Pierce's studio in the film. "That artwork's the physical equivalent of my movies," said Cronenberg. Coulter worked in plastics, casting his own image for many of the pieces. Spier also worked with Cinera, a Toronto graphic design company, to create the film's facsimile of a 1949 *Life* magazine ad for "Ephemerol," the drug which spawned the Scanners and which, ironically, can block their telepathic powers. Its fidelity to the period is uncanny.

Another nice touch is the "scan tone," heard in the film whenever the Scanners use their powers, sort of a cross between heavy breathing and the electronic howls which presaged the coming of the *Id* creature in *FORBIDDEN PLANET*. "It's halfway between a musical effect and a sound effect," said Cronenberg. "It's not meant to be anything that anyone really hears." Cronenberg hired creative sound man Bruce Nyznik in Toronto to devise the effect, specifying only that it had to be organic as opposed to electronic in nature. Nyznik treated sounds of strange, rhythmic breathing on a synthesizer to create what is heard.

SCANNERS, like *THE BROOD*, veers back into Cronenberg's obsession with the Cartesian schism, and seems to be his most explicit exploration of that theme. Thought here has become physical. But unlike the internal drama of *THE BROOD*, written at a time of pessimism and personal trial, SCAN-





Actor Louis Del Grande (left) poses with three of the exploding heads (right) used in filming *SCANNERS*. The heads are made from molds of Del Grande's face, built up around plaster skulls sealed in wax and filled with Karo syrup blood and foam rubber brains. Outermost features consist of gelatinous layers of tissue and skin tinted in flesh-like colors.

NERS is brimming with physical action like explosions and car crashes. "I've remarried," said Cronenberg. "I have another kid, and I'm feeling much more optimistic about things in general. Now that I'm feeling so good, I'm exploding heads just like any other young, normal North American boy."

*What's your idea of the perfect film?*

To me, a complete filmmaker should be able to appeal to all facets of the human existence, the sensual as well as the cerebral. I enjoy mixing these things together. I get as much pleasure writing down lots of cerebral, articulate Patrick McGooohan/*SCANNERS* type dialogue as I do from slamming a car into a wall and blowing it up. I enjoy doing both artfully and forcefully. I assume my audience will enjoy it too.

If you do get this mixture together properly, you'd sort of have a perfect example of healing that Cartesian schism. You have something that appeals to the intellect and something that appeals to the viscera. If you mix them together you get a whole movie. I don't particularly like cerebral movies. On the other hand, I don't like movies that are all viscera and no brains.

**S**CANNERS' exploding head sequence generated controversy well before the film's release. An added shot of the murdered telepath slumping down on a table was cut at the insistence of the MPAA, who refused to give the film its R-rating unless the segment went. Additionally, based on the mixed reactions of several test screenings—I know the lady editor of a large metropolitan magazine who fainted following the head explosion—Cronenberg himself re-edited the film so that the exploding head was moved further back into the narrative and did not open the picture as was originally intended.

Cronenberg actually shot an alternate version of the scene without the exploding head to accommodate the film's eventual release to television. The alternate version shows actor Louis Del Grande having a very grotesque heart attack instead. "It's so grotesque in fact," said Cronenberg, "that it's probably worse than the head blowing up. I have a feeling we wouldn't get the heart attack on television either."

**'I'm feeling much more optimistic about things in general. Now that I'm feeling so good, I'm exploding heads, just like any other young, normal North American boy.'**

Cronenberg hasn't printed or edited the alternate footage, which he feels will hurt the film if it's used. "The head blowing up not only sets up the power of the *Scanners*, but also puts the audience on edge. They think there's going to be another head going off any time the scanning starts. You won't have that, of course, if the head *doesn't* blow up."

*SCANNERS* required a large special effects and make-up staff, coordinated by Gary Zeller, who developed Zel-gel for some very realistic incendiary effects involving stunt men. Zel-gel is a flammable substance with the consistency of rubber cement which won't burn the person wearing it. When hit men invade a Scanner underground meeting, telepathic powers hurl them against a wall where they burst into flames. Zeller painted the backs of stunt men with Zel-gel and set them off using blowtorches through cracks in the wall. With such little time to prepare for the picture, Zeller worked marvels, but lack of adequate preproduction finally caught up with Cronenberg during filming of the elaborate Scanner duel between Revok and Vale which ends the picture. The effects just didn't come off.

As Cronenberg edited the production footage, he began to find structural weaknesses in the screenplay. He convinced his producers

of the need to resume filming, not only to correct story deficiencies but to redo the ending they now had, which just didn't work. Cronenberg wrote three additional scenes not found in the original script, all involving Keller, Consec's head of security, played by Lawrence Dane. Two of the scenes show meetings between Keller and Revok in the subway, and a third shows Keller watching Dr. Ruth and Vale on a monitor. "These three scenes filled out Keller's character quite a bit," said Cronenberg, "and helped the picture enormously." But that still left the problem of the ending that didn't work. For that, Cronenberg turned to make-up artist Dick Smith.

The scanning duel that resulted is the most intense use of makeup effects since William Friedkin's *THE EXORCIST*, a ground-breaker also presided over by Smith. Shots of gougings, burnings, and flesh and eyes being ripped out—as Revok and Vale unleash their telepathic powers on each other—are assembled into a crescendo of horror by Cronenberg that is physically draining for the audience. Like Friedkin, Cronenberg understands that editing is the key to making such graphic effects shocking instead of laughable. "Some of that material is on screen for a long time," added Cronenberg, "yet it looks very real. That's Dick's genius. It was exciting to work with him."

Smith had actually been approached to work on the picture from the beginning, but at the time had just come off 11 months of exhausting work under two directors on *ALTERED STATES* and wasn't about to jump right into another major project. But Smith liked the script and did agree to consult, by phone, to advise the production on techniques and the use of materials. "By the time we got around to the reshoot, though," said Cronenberg, "Dick was rested up and raring to go. He came up and actually did the reshoot on the set with his son and the special effects people. I was slightly disappointed and a little frustrated at being able only to consult with him and not actually work with him very much on the set."

*Are you saying Smith shot the ending?*

No. Let me elaborate. What happened was that I wrote down in detail just exactly what it was that I wanted to happen. Basically, it

was a slight elaboration of what was in the original script. Then Dick and I and Gary Zeller met in Montreal for two days and talked about what was possible and not possible given the time and budget we had. We all had input into what was required.

At one point, Dick was talking about holes blowing up in the floor. He was thinking more in terms of the environment around the duelists rather than what their telepathy was doing to *them*. So I had to let him know just what my concept of this telepathy was, which didn't include those kinds of physical effects. We broke it down to what effect could be taken up to which point before it had to cut away and come back to another effect, and so on. We had to have exactly the same pattern of shots involving Jennifer O'Neill, because we didn't have her around for the reshoot. That would have been difficult, anyway, because by then she was eight months pregnant [laughs].

**N**ow that SCANNERS is all but film history, Cronenberg has two projects waiting in the wings. Horror films, naturally. One, previously announced in a full-page ad in *Variety* is DAVID CRONENBERG'S FRANKENSTEIN, really nothing more than an idea at this stage. Explained Cronenberg, "Pierre David, the producer, came up to me one day and said, 'Listen to this. Just listen, and tell me what you think.' And then he said, 'DAVID CRONENBERG'S FRANKENSTEIN.' So I said, 'Sounds good to me. What about poor Mary Shelley?'"

Cronenberg agreed to give it a try (*try*, he's been remaking FRANKENSTEIN all along!), but hasn't begun work on the script yet, not even a treatment, though financing has been raised for him to write it. "I haven't really had a chance to focus on it yet," said Cronenberg. "All there is, is the idea of doing a remake of FRANKENSTEIN. It would be more of a *rethinking* than a remake, actually. For one thing, I'd try to retain Shelley's original concept of the creature being an intelligent, sensitive *man*. Not just a beast." Cronenberg is not planning on doing a period piece. He'd update it. And he's determined to make it *his*, as the title suggests, or he won't bother with it. But everything is pure speculation at this point. "This is the most exciting part of any project," said Cronenberg. "Everything is possible, and nothing has been proved to be impossible, the moment when you begin a script with nothing but enthusiasm."

Frankly, I hope Cronenberg gets writer's block on his FRANKENSTEIN script because the other project he's juggling at the moment sounds far more exciting. He pitched it to Paramount during a stop-over in Hollywood in October to fight with the MPAA over cuts in SCANNERS. It doesn't have a title yet, but it's a trilogy, three stories written by Cronenberg, one each to be directed by himself, John Carpenter and Walter Hill. The project's at a very nebulous stage at this point. Although Paramount reacted favorably to the pitch, Cronenberg has already changed all the stories. He won't comment on it other than to say, "It's going to be a genre piece."

What genre, you ask? You haven't been listening.

## THEY CAME FROM WITHIN

The pinnacle of *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*, Cronenberg's first commercial, fully professional feature made in 1975, was a scene, shown **right**, of Alan Migicovsky lying in bed, speaking softly to the parasites writhing inside his body. Massive lumps traverse his stomach and abdomen as if moles were burrowing through his flesh. The mood Cronenberg establishes with the sequence is extraordinary, totally strange, and all the more powerful because it appears to be convincingly real. This scene, and others, like the shot of Migicovsky's wife cuddling up next to him only to discover one of the parasites oozing from his mouth, shown **inset bottom**, gave Cronenberg an instant reputation in the horror field.

The inventive make-up effects of *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN* were the work of Joe Blasco, one of Cronenberg's first contacts in Hollywood, who runs a make-up school and lab at the Sunset-Gower studios. For the effect of the parasites moving around inside Migicovsky, Blasco made a thin plastic body appliance of the actor's chest and stomach, shown **below**. Blasco, in checked shirt, carefully matched the appearance of body hair on the appliance to a photograph of the actor. The parasites were balloons that Blasco taped onto Migicovsky, shown **inset top**, connected to tubes which ran down into his pajama legs. The appliance was laced-on over the balloons very tightly to conform to the actor's natural musculature. When the balloons were inflated by technicians on the set using hand pumps, the effect was complete.

"Given the time and budget we had," said Cronenberg, "Blasco's effect was just amazing." Cronenberg filmed all the scenes of Migicovsky in bed in a single day, and spent the full morning shooting the special effect of the moving parasites, working on past lunch. Migicovsky had to remain in bed and have his food brought in, drinking through straws, because the company didn't have time to break down and then set up the effect again to resume filming.

"We specifically did a shot where you see Migicovsky having a spasm and his whole body jerks upward," said Cronenberg. "Blasco really wanted me to do that one because he said people who were watching the film might think there was a false chest, that the actor's head was stuck up through the bed with a false body in front of it. That movement made it harder to figure out how it was done."

Cronenberg, in film after film, works to make his audience *believe* the impossible.

Joe Blasco fashioning his special make-up effect.



John Carpenter has been quoted as saying, "Cronenberg is better than all the rest of us combined." I'm sure you've heard that quote.

That's a wonderful quote.

How do you feel about it?

Well, my first reaction is, "How incredibly sweet for him to say it." It's unusual for a young man in his position to say something like that. So I was very flattered and very impressed he could say such a thing. I really can't otherwise comment on it, other than to say that in one sense we're working shoulder to shoulder. Yes, I think that I'm really good, but whether I could possibly be as good as all the rest combined... well, I don't know what that means. I think maybe what John said was rhetoric, meant to draw attention to someone which he perhaps thought hadn't been noticed well enough.

**C**ronenberg's strength as a filmmaker is that he writes his own material. His approach is novelistic. His scripts are incredibly detailed, dense with characterization and the precise description of setting and action. Missing entirely is framing information like "close-up" or "long shot," structural devices like "cut to" or "fade in," or camera moves like "dolly" and "pan." These are decisions Cronenberg makes on the set or in the editing room. "This is the approach that gets me into my trance the best," said Cronenberg. "It makes it flow for me, makes it feel most real to me."

"Stanley Kubrick says writing is a total mystery," added Cronenberg. "He can't understand how someone can sit down with a blank sheet of paper and write something. After seeing *THE SHINING*, I believe it. He said he wanted to make an epic horror film. Since he didn't trust the genre, he felt like he had to turn it inside out. But he didn't really understand the power of the genre. He didn't know how to scare people, probably because he doesn't understand them. There's nothing more pathetic than to think of Kubrick, sitting in his little office, reading novel after novel, looking for something that could be his next project."

A director or a screenwriter is only half a filmmaker. Cronenberg is the whole thing, a bona fide *auteur* who writes what he directs. His work not only satisfies crass commercial requirements but incorporates his own peculiar brand of deeply personal symbolism, not to mention a truly twisted sense of humor. Each of his films exhibit an intellect, an aesthetic, a vision of the horror genre that is uniquely Cronenberg.

Would you say that horror should be complex, as your films are?

Oh yes. I'm fully aware of the incredible complexity, the incredible variables in things. I've had times when I've walked the streets and am simply amazed. It's quiet, there seems to be order, there seems to be calm, and I don't understand how it can be possible. You certainly can't believe in order if you read the newspapers, which I don't. They make me crazy. But nothing is simple; everything is intriguing. I can't imagine how anyone can manage to be bored in life. The complexities, the ironies, the subtleties are fantastic. This all comes out in my films, I think. Life is a tree of complexities. □



# science fiction typographics

**Their studio is filled with the latest high-tech gear, but to the Greenbergs, type is the ultimate special effect.**

**Article by Paul R. Gagne**

In the summer of 1978, as audiences were eagerly anticipating the Christmas release of *SUPERMAN*, theaters began running a teaser trailer that nearly whipped them into a frenzy. Normally, such trailers will bore you to death because they show no scenes from the film. This one got more word-of-mouth than whatever Warner Bros. feature it happened to be spliced to, yet the trailer consisted merely of words.

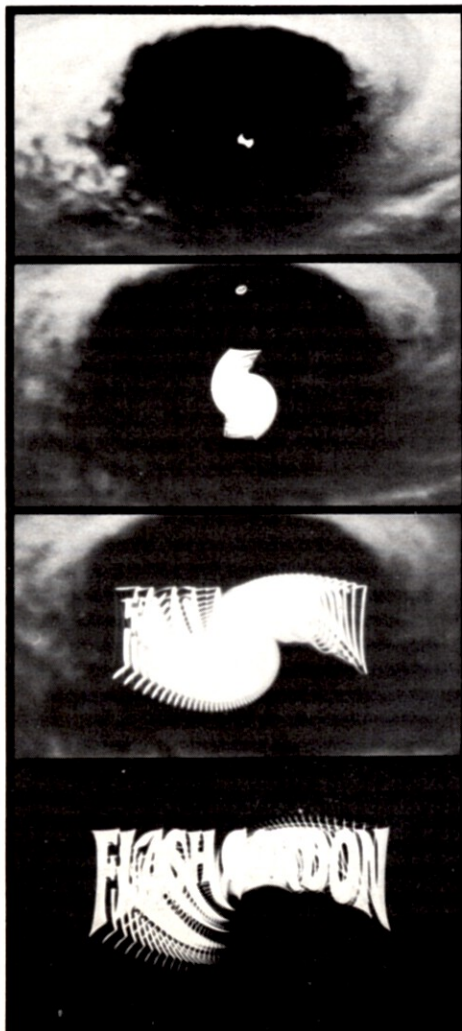
To its creator, Richard Greenberg of New York City's R/Greenberg Associates, words are *everything*. They are not merely to be read. They have power. Knowing this, the shy, soft-spoken Greenberg undergoes a transformation when discussing his work, becoming as forceful as an evangelist spreading the gospel.

"I want to show you a new star of the silver screen," Greenberg led off a speech last October to the Society of Typographic Arts in Chicago. "A star with a glamorous, sensuous, glittering new presence, having the power to tease, to amuse, to trick and to terrify. It's a star we all know very well, but whose incredible cinematic potential is just beginning to be realized. That star is typography."

If this spiel sounds outrageous, you probably haven't seen the *SUPERMAN* trailer. A groundbreaker in the field of movie promotion, its enormous success changed the way films are being sold and started Greenberg (in association with Frankfurt Communications Inc) on the happy career of providing animation effects and graphics for films like *ALIEN*, *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, *XANADU* and *RESURRECTION*. Currently making the rounds are Greenberg trailers on such upcoming films as *THE WOLFEN*, *ALTERED STATES* and *FLASH GORDON*.

Increasingly, Greenberg's company is moving toward supplying special effects for the films themselves. Approached initially to do the opening and main titles for *FLASH GORDON*, Greenberg was soon handed some of the effects work from the obviously

**Opposite: Robert (right) and Richard Greenberg of R/Greenberg Associates pose with their prize prop from *FLASH GORDON*, a plastic Hawkman used to create a flying army. Inset: Bottom-lit animation effects for *FLASH GORDON*'s theatrical trailer pays tribute to the character's comic strip origins. Below: A "teaser" for *FLASH GORDON* was created without using any footage from the film. Instead, typography, streak photography and appropriate backgrounds sell the product: audiences are drawn into a whirling vortex as Max Von Sydow tells of the violent plans of Ming the Merciless. From the center, a strobing, rotating zoom on the logo brings the title into view.**

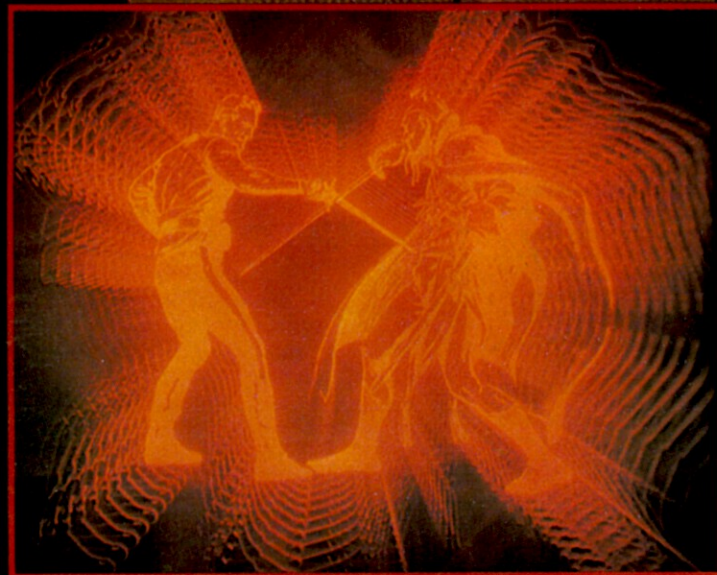


overtaxed production. Initial assignments, with very tight due dates, consisted of creating force fields and laser effects, which involved generating artwork, pulling mattes and separations and then recompositing all the various elements, a breeze for the company's totally in-house optical effects facilities. Greenberg also designed the jet-like support beams beneath the Sky Palace of the Hawkmen and the force field surrounding Mingo City, consisting of brilliant yellow beams of light which spin around the city in a pyramidal shape, supplying those elements directly to effects supervisor Frank Van Der Veer in Hollywood for final compositing.

One of Greenberg's more unusual effects in *FLASH GORDON* is the shot at the end of the film in which the Hawkmen fly into a formation which spells out the words, "Thanks Flash!" The last-minute idea left very little time to complete the effect, and the company was only provided with a *single* plastic model of one of the Hawkmen (now displayed proudly on the second floor of their midtown Manhattan production offices). Greenberg multiplied his lonely Hawkman into an airforce, photographing it from every conceivable angle while adding the motion necessary for them to mass together using a computerized animation stand. This footage was then matted into footage of the sky for the final effect, one which invariably garners a big laugh from audiences.

But Greenberg's major contribution to the film was the opening and main titles, designed to bridge the gap between *FLASH GORDON*'s origin as a newspaper comic strip and its reincarnation as an overblown Hollywood epic. "It was important to remember for the audience the character's graphic roots," said Greenberg.

"It was very important in *SUPERMAN* to bring that in, during that initial scene with the small child reading a comic book and the Daily Planet," added Bob Greenberg, Richard's brother and partner in the company, who looks after the business side of



things. "In the same way our opening shows some of the comic strip images that are part of the feature. It leads into the first shot of the film in a very natural, integrated way, utilizing graphic animation, special effects, live action and opticals."

Greenberg's images for the opening and main titles (shown previous page), which transform comic art panels into the idiom of modern film effects, also serve as the basis for the trailer used to promote FLASH GORDON. Such unity of image concept has been the hallmark of R/Greenberg Associates' work in film promotion. "I believe it's the ideal approach," emphasized Richard Greenberg, "a consistent look to an entire promotional campaign that builds right in to the beginning of the film itself, setting up the promise of something spectacular and leading the viewer by stages into the fulfillment of that promise."

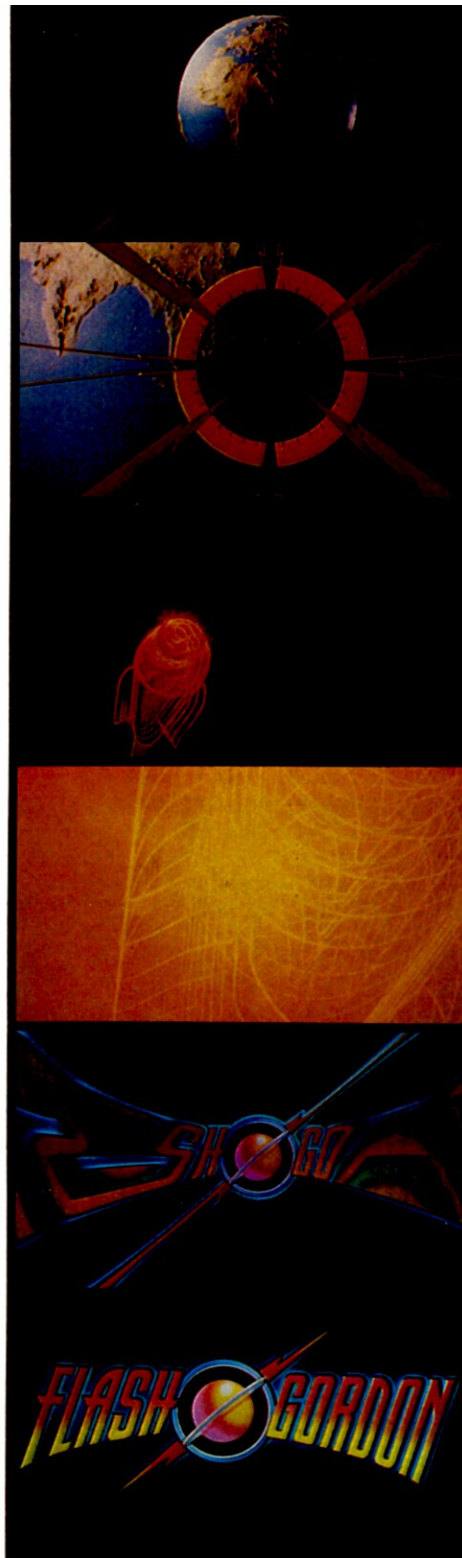
The film and trailer open with Ming the Merciless targeting poor planet Earth for death and destruction (shown right), a compendium of stock disaster footage edited with production shots and some live action scenes filmed by Greenberg. When Ming cackles rhetorically, "Pathetic earthlings, who can save you now?!" the rock group Queen blares out with the expected answer, "Flash Gordduhnnn! Savior of the Universe!" leading into the titles and Greenberg's graphic *homage* to the movie's roots.

Greenberg specializes in sparkling, high-tech opticals like those seen in his FLASH GORDON work, first popularized by their extensive use in television commercials. The technique's characteristic look arises from the use of transparent, bottom-lit animation. In contrast, conventional animation uses opaque artwork, lit from above. A more important difference in the technique is the manner in which artwork is photographed.

"The motion and effects seen in bottom-lit animation are mostly created within the camera itself," explained Bob Greenberg. "There is very little artwork involved. Lighting from beneath and plotting moves on the camera create the effects." And with the camera now tied to computers, the diversity and complexity of effects that can be achieved are truly startling.

Bottom-lit animation techniques date back 12 years or more, and several companies were doing it well before the Greenbergs set up shop in 1976 with almost no capital and a manual Oxberry animation stand. Bob Greenberg credits the success of STAR WARS for the boom in the technique during recent years. "A lot of the innovations were in 2001, and possibly even before that," he said. "What's important is that people started asking for a whole lot more, including art directors and producers of commercials at the agencies."

Not surprisingly, most of the Greenbergs' feature film work has involved science fiction, horror and fantasy projects whose subject matter allows full play for their imagination and the use of bottom-lit graphic effects. The genre connection extends even to their work on projects like 9 TO 5, an upcoming Christmas release starring Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton as rebellious office workers. The firm provided about 12 minutes of optical effects for three fantasy sequences, in which the leads get stoned on



The theatrical trailer for FLASH GORDON, combining typography, bottom-lit animation effects and live action photography shot at R/Greenberg Associates' midtown Manhattan offices. Similar effects—designed by the Greenbergs in consultation with director Mike Hodges and film editor Malcolm Cooke—are used for the opening title sequence of the feature. Unlike conventional animation, which requires a different piece of artwork for each frame of film, bottom-lit animation effects rely on back-lighting, complex camera moves and in-camera manipulation for their impact.

pot and imagine what they would do if they had control over their male-chauvinist-pig boss.

Their work on 9 TO 5 illustrates the range of projects the Greenbergs are tackling, for theirs is one of the rare shops to graduate from doing commercials for films to handling effects for the films themselves. Why is it unusual? "Few people in the film business can look at commercials and make the transition between what you're doing with them and what you can do in features," noted Bob Greenberg. "Movie producers can't relate to something like the commercial we did for General Motors, which is as complicated as anything being done for feature work."

But with the soaring letterforms of the SUPERMAN trailer, R/Greenberg Associates graduated to the big time—and the big screen. The SUPERMAN campaign was still an ad, but it was an ad film people could relate to.

The SUPERMAN teaser has the audience flying high among the clouds at dusk, sunlight illuminating the sky like a golden cathedral. Names of the film's stars streak into view from out of frame and coalesce as they recede into the sunlit horizon, followed by another and another, quickening in tempo. Following the last, the SUPERMAN "S" materializes majestically as a climax while the onrushing clouds dissolve into the starry blackness of space. The trailer makes us believe that words can fly, even if the feature that came later never convinced us half so much that a man could.

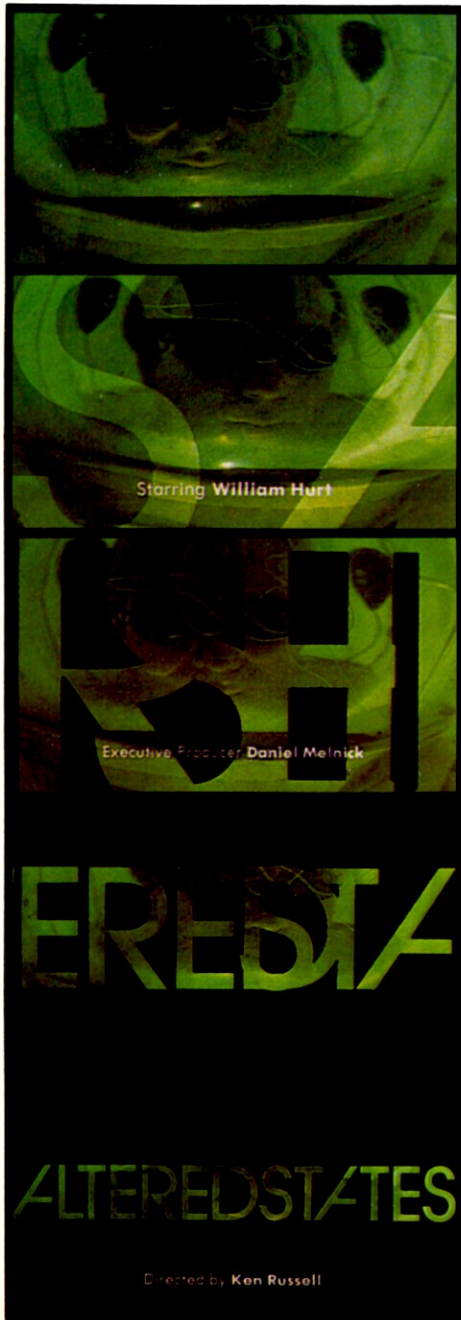
"Much of the extravagance of SUPERMAN lay in the enormous size and renown of its cast," said Richard Greenberg, explaining the approach that was used. "This became an obvious selling point for the promotion. Another important facet of the campaign was the film's use of the latest technology in special effects production. I used typography to communicate both of these aspects."

The assignment on SUPERMAN came to R/Greenberg Associates through Frankfurt Communications, now their exclusive agency for work in film promotion. Richard Greenberg collaborated on the trailer's concept and design with creative director Stephen Frankfurt, and came up with a method to produce the jet-like streaking of the star names as they soar into view, (shown far right). Basically, Greenberg used a timer on his camera shutter to move up and down on the artwork with the shutter open. "It's a slit-scan approach," explained Bob Greenberg. "The names consist of a kodalith, a black and white high contrast film element, that is slightly offset so the camera sees only the edge light coming through. The camera is layering that image onto each frame of film." The flying movement of the logo was programmed by computer, but Richard manually had to do the repetitive movements required for the streaking, which gave the logo a dimensional perspective as it soared. Footage of the logo was then composited with color-corrected, step-printed cloud footage, originally photographed for ICE STATION ZEBRA.

The SUPERMAN trailer wasn't the originator of slit-scan effects (Greenberg came up with the idea independently of the others), but the trailer helped popularize the now-common technique. Even before the SUPER-

**“Few people in the film business can look at commercials and make the transition between what you’re doing with them and what you can do in features. They can’t relate to our commercial for General Motors.”**

The opening titles for Ken Russell’s *ALTERED STATES*, completed in cooperation with Tony Silver Films. Told to create titles that would not disturb the narrative flow of the film, Richard Greenberg devised a “Greek chorus” of typography. Beginning with a close-up of a face in the water of an isolation tank, solid black geometrical shapes begin to shift over the image; in actuality, the words “ALTERED” and “STATES” crisscrossing on-screen. As the credits roll, the camera pulls slowly back, revealing the title.



MAN trailer hit the screens, the firm was using the technique for their other work, and installed the most up-to-date Oxberry animation stand available so that all the necessary camera movements could be computerized.

At the time, Richard Donner was in London working on the design of SUPERMAN’s main titles. “He was using some of the most sophisticated optical houses in London, who were trying to get plastic letters to fly!” laughed Bob Greenberg, who sent Donner a copy of one of their latest commercials using the new computerized equipment and got the assignment almost immediately.

The SUPERMAN main title work was more complex optically than the trailer, but far less effective in its impact. Richard Greenberg blames that on legal restrictions, something he dubs, “the bane of any title designer.” Contractual agreements with the performers mandated that each title had to be the same size and remain on the screen for the same length of time. This prevented establishing a tempo to the sequence—other than monotony. Another problem is that the background footage of space in the titles seems far less eloquent and profound than the cloud footage of the trailer. The titles were to suggest the wonders of a voyage through deep space, but the “wonders,” actually macrophotography of burning phosphors, looked rather tacky.

Even so, their work created a stir, and they quickly followed it with an integrated campaign for ALIEN that was just as successful. The ALIEN teaser trailer also shows no scenes from the film, creating a feeling of impending terror using images of flight over a barren alien landscape, intercut with shots of an egg as the word ALIEN gradually forms on the screen, stroke by stroke. With the egg and film title fully in view, the egg cracks in a brilliant flash of light and the message appears: “In space, no one can hear you scream.”

“That line came to Barbara Gips, a copywriter for Frankfurt Communications Inc., while she was washing dishes,” laughed Bob Greenberg. “All the previous copy that had been written was dropped, because it sounded so right.”

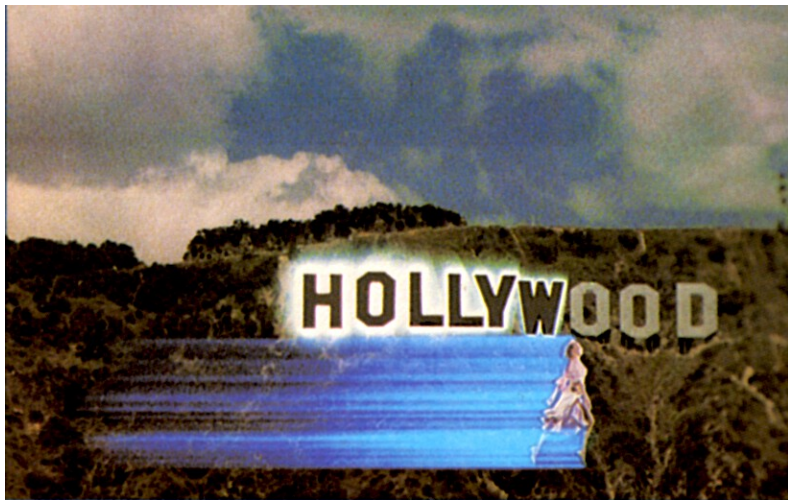
The egg was about the size of an ostrich egg, positioned on a tabletop miniature set of the alien landscape in such a way that it appeared to be floating. Greenberg was able to get a great sense of scale and speed as the camera seemingly flies over the landscape and comes up to the egg, without resorting to the use of a snorkel camera system. The flash of light which cracks the egg at the end was added in postproduction using a kodolith backlit with an arc light and smoke.

As with SUPERMAN, when Ridley Scott saw the ALIEN teaser campaign he discarded the already-completed footage of the film’s opening and hired the Greenbergs to duplicate their work. Scott even wanted to use the Greenberg’s music—an eerie mixture of sound and music created by Jonathan Elias and Lou Descharmes—but didn’t have the time to recut ALIEN’s soundtrack.

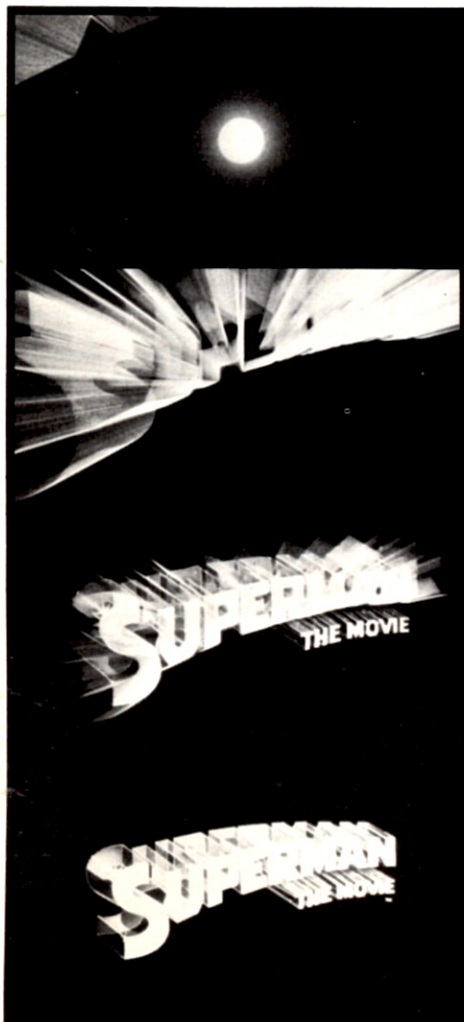
“The idea behind the ALIEN titles, and all our film promotion work really, is to set a mood for the feature, to set the audience up for something,” said Bob Greenberg. “Our titles are always right for a particular picture,



The stunning theatrical trailer for SUPERMAN, which rocketed R/Greenberg Associates to prominence in film promotion. A form of slit-scan photography (a result of panning and zooming over artwork with the camera shutter open) created the three-dimensional letterforms, which were then combined with cloud footage that was skip printed to give the illusion of speed. When director Richard Donner saw the trailer in London, he immediately hired the Greenbergs to design the film’s opening and closing titles as well.



The close of the **SUPERMAN** television commercial, utilizing the same "flying" three-dimensional letterforms created for the theatrical trailer and the film's titles and credits. Such unity of design is not always the rule in film promotion, but it's a trademark of R/Greenberg Associates' work. Richard Greenberg plotted most of the necessary camera moves for the trailer and television commercial manually, but used an elaborate computer hooked to their animation camera for the complex and lengthy film credits.



so they're not perceived as being separate from the film. They're *designed*. There are a lot of optical houses just doing titles, but there are very few title *designers*.

If there are few title *designers*, even fewer are given actual scenes from the film to work on. R/Greenberg Associates' work in feature film effects began with some elaborate post-production opticals for Universal's **RESURRECTION** [see 10:2:4 for detailed coverage], which led to their work on the optical effects for Universal's **XANADU**, a summer musical fantasy that fizzled at the box office despite its big-name stars and hit songs. **XANADU** is probably the first example of a feature saturated with the kind of flashy high-tech opticals commonly seen in television commercials. The fact that it didn't go over with the public is no indictment of the bottom-lit graphics technique. The effects got generally good notices even when the film didn't. The Greenbergs are loathe to discuss the critical reaction to the film, calling it "sad."

Said Bob Greenberg about bottom-lit graphics in general, "A lot of the time these effects are used to cover up bad photography or to jazz up the look of something. That kind of use should probably be eliminated." Most of **XANADU**'s effects were based on footage that wasn't shot with special effects in mind, according to Greenberg, perhaps indicating that optical "jazzing up" was what Universal had in mind.

This wasn't the case with one of the film's best sequences however, the opening in which Olivia Newton-John and her fellow Muses spring to life out of a wall painting. That sequence was designed for blue screen from the beginning and shooting was supervised at all times by either Greenberg or his chief opticals expert, Joel Hynek (the son of Northwestern University astronomer and **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** technical advisor J. Allen Hynek). Since each of the nine Muses springs to life at a different time, a blue screen element for each dancer had to be filmed separately. Frame blow ups of their starting positions served as a guide for artists to create the wall painting. When the image of the painting is dissolved out and the image of the dancer is dissolved in, the artwork seems to magically come alive, an effect enhanced by a purplish glow roto-scoped around each figure.

"That sequence is as complicated as special effects can get," said Bob Greenberg, justifiably proud. "The length of the sequence and the large number of blue screen



The opening sequence of **XANADU**—in which a mural of the nine Muses seemingly comes to life—is one of the most complex optical sequences ever filmed because of the number of elements involved and the length of the scene. To create the mural, full-size images of each dancer were projected and painted on removable skins. The mural was first shot with the "skins" on, then with them off, dissolving in matching blue-screen footage of the live dancer. Since each dancer comes to life at different times, each was photographed separately against a blue screen. The glowing Muses depart in a streak of color (top left), an animated effect borrowed from R/Greenberg Associates' work in television commercials.



elements made it complex and difficult to do, because the nine Muses are constantly overlapping one another in varying close-ups, medium shots and long shots."

Such complex effects work is partly made possible by the Greenberg's new state-of-the-art optical printer, an impressive machine nestled on the first of two floors of their hospital-clean production facilities. The only one of its kind, the Oxberry printer can project a composite image of the optical elements to be combined, allowing the optical technician to do critical lineups in a much larger format than normal. Special high intensity light sources make it easier to see and adjust alignment of the various strips of film. And the printer's sophisticated circuitry and closed-loop DC motors are computer controlled for incredible flexibility and performance.

"We have the ability to use the optical printer just for special effects," boasted Bob Greenberg. "Since we don't take on any outside work other than our own productions, we're able to really take the time to experiment with it. And we're experimenting all the time."

Greenberg compares their effects facilities to the apparatus George Lucas set up to film STAR WARS. He calls it a "mini-Lucas" operation, referring specifically to their ability to control every facet of production in-house. "This approach is unique, as far as I know, in the opticals business," he said. It's an approach he feels will enable them to garner an increasing share of the work in feature film effects.

Bob Greenberg credits his brother Richard for creating the "look" that remains consistent from project to project, even when different people are involved. The look is an extension of Richard's background in graphic design and architecture, which he studied at the University of Illinois.

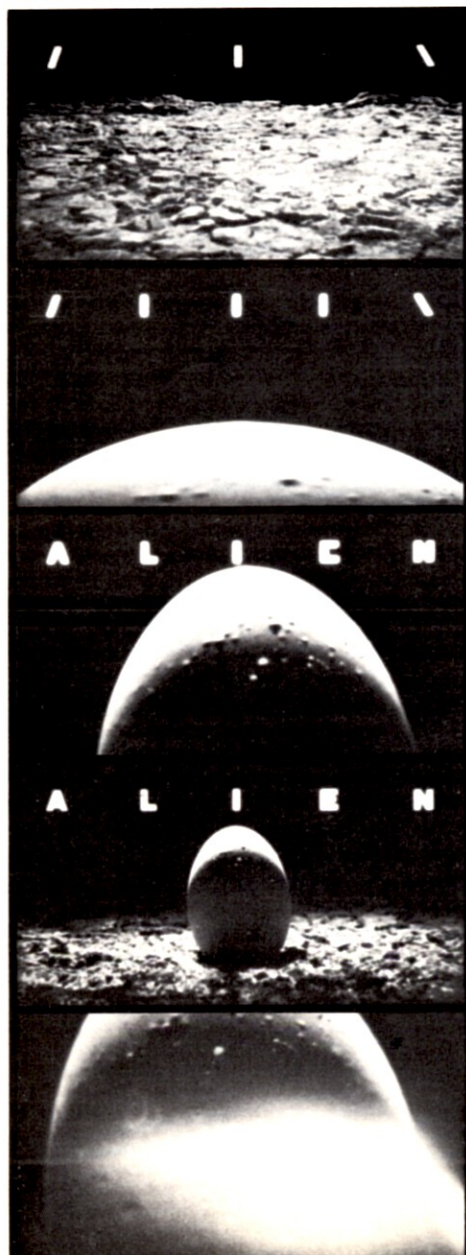
"I always expected film would be an interesting hobby rather than a career," said Richard Greenberg, explaining how he caught the film bug during a summer vacation from design school. "I worked in the basement of my parents' home," he said. "My animation stand was a non-reflex Bolex mounted on a tripod facing the floor. My materials were spray glue, magazine clippings, photostats and Scotch tape, which was used for editing. By the end of the summer, I knew I had found a medium through which I could communicate."

Greenberg's film, about the 1968 anti-war movement in Chicago, was eventually submitted to a New York film festival competition sponsored by Schlitz Beer. He won first prize: \$1,000. The message was clear: "I was caught," he said. He moved over to the school's cinema department, where he began shooting film graphics. He later got a job with Pablo Ferro, who designed the opening for THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR, and gained further experience working in commercials and film promotion.

Richard's brother Bob was always interested in film, but was an executive with RC Cola, running one of their subsidiary's manufacturing plants. But a corporate shakeup left him uneasy and determined to run a company of his own. The two brothers got together and pooled their expertise—Bob in business and administration, Richard in

**"In a TV commercial you might have only three seconds of time, so the visual impact of the effect has to be great. Incredible things occur when you take a graphic designed for commercials and use it on a wide screen."**

As with the campaign for SUPERMAN, it was decided not to use scenes from the film for theatrical teasers for ALIEN; typography was chosen instead. The title coalesces abstractly above a table-top landscape, as shots of a surrealist egg are intercut. When Ridley Scott saw the trailer, he incorporated the idea of the slowly-forming title into the film's beginning. The spots were produced by Silvergreen, a joint venture of Tony Silver Films and R/Greenberg Associates.



film and graphic design—and formed R/Greenberg Associates with just \$12,000 between them.

Success came quickly, helped by the hiring of Ken Stytzer, an experienced designer and director of commercials who had worked with Pablo Ferro and was considered an expert in the use of bottom-lit graphics. Richard also credits their success to their association with Stephen Frankfurt and Frankfurt Communications. "Steve can 'see' my ideas as well as I do before a single image is captured on film," he said. "He understands the pure aesthetics of type and design as well as he knows how to manipulate them in order to sell a product."

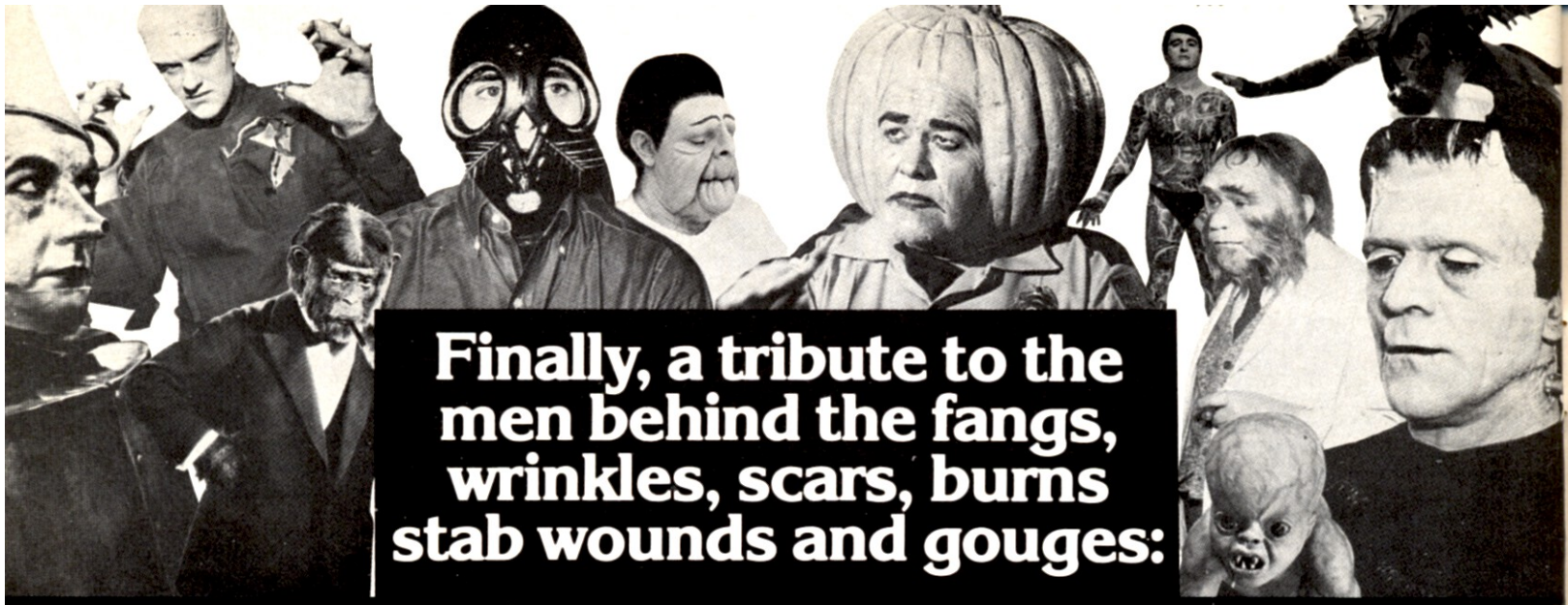
Bob Greenberg sees a lot of applications in feature films for the type of bottom-lit graphics they do for commercials. "In a commercial you might have only three seconds of time, so the visual impact of the effect has to be great in order for it to be remembered and retained. That particular effect doesn't have to be used the same way in a feature. It can be subdued. It can be just part of a whole sequence of elaborate effects that leads to a payoff. Incredible things occur when you take a graphic designed for television commercials and use that same kind of effect on a wide screen. These effects are extremely powerful visually. We're interested in taking a feature much further in terms of special effects than we did in XANADU, and I think we will."

While R/Greenberg Associates plans to do an increasing amount of feature film work, they don't intend to give up their bread-and-butter: commercials and film promotion. "One of the reasons the commercial work is so important to us," explained Bob Greenberg, "is that a lot of innovations in films come from commercial work. A lot of people would be surprised at just how complicated a commercial can get. In some cases the work is much more difficult."

Eventually the Greenbergs plan to get into film production themselves to exert the ultimate creative control over the effects they are producing. "With the facilities and the people we have here we can easily produce, direct and oversee the postproduction of a feature totally in-house," said Bob Greenberg. "We're looking for the right kind of project to take on that challenge."

Chances are whatever project is decided on, it will fall within the domain of *cinefantastique*, to give full reign to the potential of the company's bottom-lit graphics and film opticals capabilities. The Greenbergs won't be the first to attempt such a crossover to features from commercials and graphic design. It's a tough transition that has defeated some immensely talented people—notably Robert Abel, an unqualified giant in commercial production and design who abdicated responsibility for the special effects for STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE.

One thing is sure, R/Greenberg Associates will know how to promote their film should they ever succeed in making one, using the kind of graphic trailers and commercials for which they have become justifiably renowned. "The simple beauty of a letter form," said Richard Greenberg, "can lend an aura of quality and perfection to the most unlikely products." □

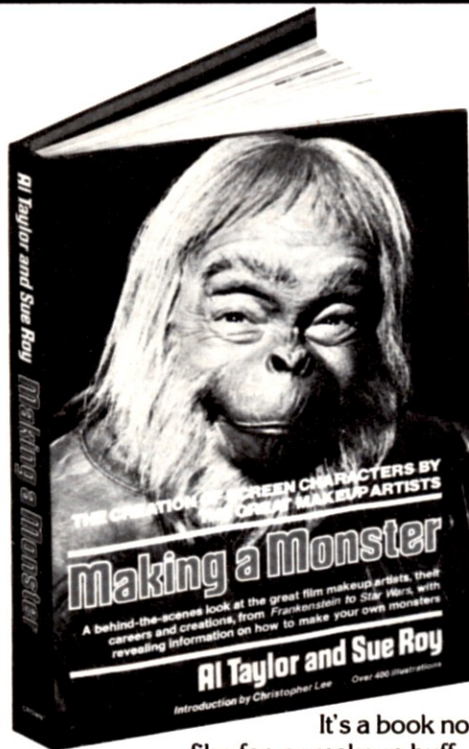


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- ★ Roy Ashton
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# REVIEWS

## American Gothic ideals as seen thru puke-colored lenses

### MOTEL HELL

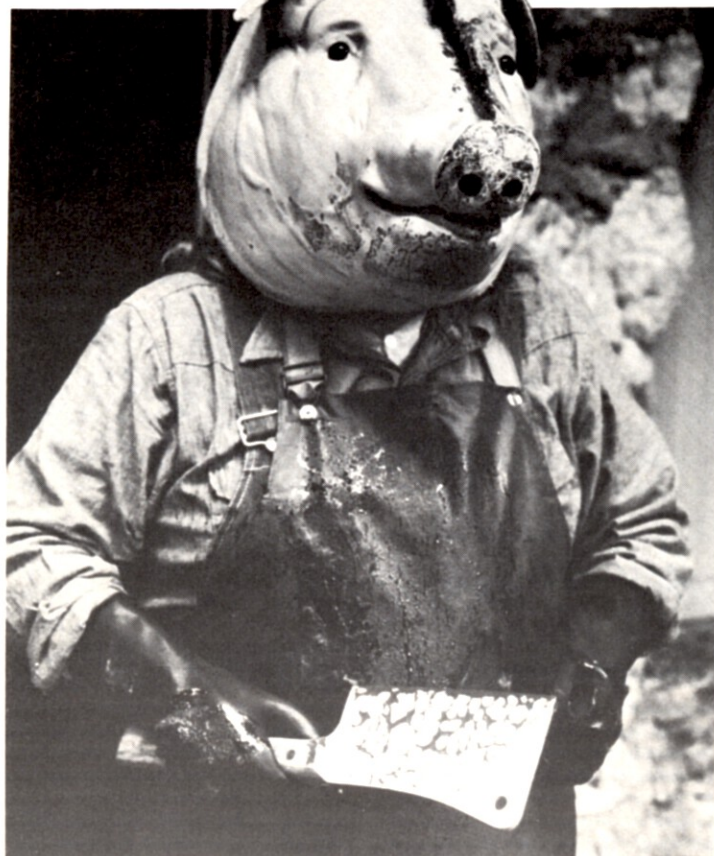
A United Artists release. 10/80. 106 minutes. In Technicolor and Dolby stereo. Directed by Kevin Connor. Produced and written by Steven-Charles Jaffe and Robert Jaffe. Director of photography, Thomas Del Ruth. Editor, Bernard Gribble. Music by Lance Rubin. Art director, Joseph M. Altadonna.

Vincent Smith..... Rory Calhoun  
Bruce Smith..... Paul Linke  
Ida Smith..... Nancy Parsons  
Terry..... Nina Axelrod  
Reverend Billy..... Wolfman Jack

When Milton Subotsky and the Britons adapted the fabled EC horror comics of the early '50s about eight years ago, the results were not quite right—some uniquely American element was missing. Now another Britisher, Kevin Connor, and the sons of American producer Herb Jaffe, Steven-Charles and Robert Jaffe, have fashioned a film that, while not a credited adaptation, evokes much of EC Comics' irreverent and perversely funny approach to horror. *MOTEL HELL* is as manic and entertainingly sick a film as we've had in some time. It glories in that which was missing from the Subotsky films: a jaundiced sense of self-parody.

Farmer Vincent (Rory Calhoun) is a smiling capitalist. He runs the seemingly quiet Motel Hello and has made a name for himself on the side as a purveyor of quality smoked meats. Everyone loves Farmer Vincent. He grins from billboards and bumper stickers. The fact that he and his lumpish, psychotic sister (Nancy Parsons) are also mass-murderers who smoke human flesh as well as piggies' is okay, because, hell, they're jes' plain folks trying to make it in a tough old world.

Farmer Vincent feels his "good work" is helping to solve the world's biggest problems: not enough food and too many people. He kidnaps members of the freak and wierdo set he finds so pitifully appalling and, in his secret garden, literally plants his drugged and surgically muted victims up to their necks. His captives are given rich liquid diets until harvest time, when they are uprooted, carted to the smoke house, and turned into tidy profit. This is capitalism at its most unrestrained, but there is more. *MOTEL HELL* is American Gothic wired on brainless psalmody and the sickest possible interpretation of *noblesse oblige*. Farmer Vincent is himself a victim, a diseased by-product of the Protestant work



No, it's not Miss Piggy, that's Farmer Vincent's psychotic sister (Nancy Parsons) clutching the cleaver in Kevin Connor's gleefully crazy *MOTEL HELL*.

ethic, of dim television sets with ceaselessly droning evangelists, of Twinkies and Ho Ho's that just don't satisfy, of bondage freaks and punk rockers who deserve to be dead and would be better off so.

*MOTEL HELL* gets down in the dirt and shapes a viciously funny distortion of so much we foolishly hold dear. Farmer Vincent epitomizes the underbelly of Rockwellian America, where inner tubes on a placid lake can mean horror and sudden death, where murder is less blasphemous than free sex, where idiotic families of tourists happily munch human jerky, and where the sheriff is unknowingly "the biggest cannibal around."

*MOTEL HELL*'s eerie ambience shows America and its simple-minded ideals through puke-colored lenses. It's vision is, well, crazy; scenes in the garden are goofily horrible, with a greenish pall cast by tinted pole lights, the neat rows of gently moving canvas bags set in the earth, the angry and impotent heads beneath, the phlegmy gurgling of the crop. It's wildly improbable, unabashedly stupid. There is something narcotic about *MOTEL HELL*'s unstoppable, gross good-humor—it gives the audience that special high of pure, uncut lunacy. Farmer Vincent is kind to his animals and does not wish them to suffer unnecessarily: a

sequence in which he uses portable psychedelic party lights to mesmerize a trio of captive drug brothers before snapping their necks is at once horrifying and screamingly funny.

All this may sound irresponsible and, worse, incomprehensible, but it is not. The Jaffe brothers had trouble getting *MOTEL HELL* made (not surprising, considering the effect its bizarre outlook might have on your average studio boss), but it doesn't look it. With the help of experience gained working as production assistants for their father on *DEMON SEED* and *TIME AFTER TIME*, they brought the film in on a six-week shooting schedule under its \$4 million budget. The result is a well-shot, cleverly paced film. Connor and the Jaffe brothers have a bit of fun with us and do not throw all their cards on the table in the first five minutes, opting instead to build first a sense of vague unease before getting down to the gleeful horror.

Nor do they compromise themselves at the conclusion—and neither does Farmer Vincent. After a climactic chainsaw duel in which he is fatally gored, he expresses guilt... for using preservatives in his meats! There will be no glib repentance at the end of *this* movie. Farmer Vincent, you're all right.

David J. Hogan

## A retreat from cruel reality to the cruel illusions of the movies.

### FADE TO BLACK

An American Cinema Release. 10/80. 100 minutes. In Color. Directed and written by Vernon Zimmerman. Produced by George Braunstein, Ron Hamady. Executive producers, Irwin Yablans, Sylvio Tabet. Director of photography, Alex Phillips, Jr. Film editor, Howard Kunin. Makeup, Patty Bunch, Karen Faye. Special effects, James Wayne.

Eric..... Dennis Christopher  
Marilyn..... Linda Kerridge  
Dr. Moriarity..... Tim Thomerson  
Gary Bialy..... Morgan Paull  
Aunt Stella..... Eve Brent Ashe

Everyone dumps on Eric, poor pale nebbish, from his boss and workmates to a blowzy whore he passes on the street. What's more, Eric (Dennis Christopher) has falsely buried himself under a load of guilt about the "death" of his mother—a rising Hollywood star—and the crippling car accident that ended his "aunt's" promising dance career. So it's no surprise when Eric Binford breaks.

Eric is a movie buff who retreats from the cruel insults of the real world to the cluttered fantasy of his bedroom, where he is drawn into the world of movie clips, makeup and memorabilia. Eric takes on the identity of his favorite screen characters—Dracula, the Mummy, even Hopalong Cassidy—and acts out the violent scenes from his favorite films—*PSYCHO*, *WHITE HEAT* and others—on all those who bother him, leaving a trail of explicit murders for the police to figure out.

Writer-director Vernon Zimmerman (a minor cult figure for his *UNHOLY ROLLERS*) has drenched *FADE TO BLACK* with movie lore, which is where the film is most interesting. Christopher delivers a terribly earnest performance as the killer. His slow fall from grace is admirably nuanced—it's almost as if his small-town character from *BREAKING AWAY* sought refuge from life in movies rather than bicycle racing and Italian culture.

But in many ways, *FADE TO BLACK* is a mess. Sequences seem to be re-cut out of order, several of the minor characters are woefully mis-conceived and additionally hindered with inept performances (notably Tim Thomerson as criminologist Dr. Moriarity), and the ragged plotting never properly juxtaposes Eric's exploits with the police efforts to track him down, so it's something of a surprise when they emerge to trap him at the end.

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Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour share a last meal in *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*.

## With so much going for it, why isn't this the classic it could be?

### SOMEWHERE IN TIME

A Universal Pictures release. 9.80. 103 minutes. Technicolor. Directed by Jeannot Szwarc. Produced by Stephen Deutsch. Screenplay by Richard Matheson, from his novel *Bid Time Return*. Director of photography, Isidore Mankofsky. Score, John Barry. Edited by Jeff Gourson. Production designer, Seymour Klate. Associate producer, Steven Bickel.

Richard Collier..... Christopher Reeve  
Elise McKenna..... Jane Seymour  
W.F. Robinson..... Christopher Plummer  
Laura Roberts..... Teresa Wright  
Astonished Man..... Richard Matheson

Finding fault with *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* feels a bit like criticizing the coloring of a butterfly. It is difficult to be negative about something this pleasant and sincere. It is a work that treads over treacherous ground, and not without a substantial measure of success. But the film falls short of equalling the great romantic-fantasy classics it emulates—*PORTRAIT OF JENNIE* and *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* among them. The problem is not that "you just can't make movies like that anymore;" where the film fails, it's the film's fault, not the genre's.

The story is well founded in the genre's best traditions: a man (Christopher Reeve), obsessed with the vision of a woman long dead (Jane Seymour), travels back in time to find her. The film does not try to rationally explain *how* playwright Richard Collier makes his voyage (he accomplishes it through sheer force of will) but instead concentrates on the love between Collier and Elise McKenna, a love that spans a gap of 68 years.

From the standpoint of the production, *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* is impeccable. Its gorgeous settings (largely at an elegant hotel on Mackinac Island), outstanding photography, fine John Barry score and other superior technical elements all contribute

to just the kind of mood the film wants to create. Its talented and attractive leads are perfect for this story. Christopher Reeve's sensitive playwright reveals even more of the acting range he displayed in *SUPERMAN*, although he does become a bit too bumpkin-ish after time-tripping, even for a stranger in a strange landscape. The much under-appreciated Jane Seymour, never hard to look at, becomes even more beautiful in the gaze of Isidore Mankofsky's camera.

Director Jeannot Szwarc emerges from the shadows of some routine commercial assignments as a director to watch [see feature story on page 14]. His confident and fluid camera movements aren't flashy but to the point, keeping the story prominent at all times. Szwarc tells as much of the story as possible in straightforward visual terms (Collier's agonized snapback to 1979—a POV shot as if quickly receding down a long, dark corridor—comes to mind) and elicits sincere, affecting work from his actors.

One effective scene shows Collier's initial time-jump. Collier surrounds himself with an environment consistent with 1912, and, after many failures, succeeds in achieving the level of concentration that enables him to project himself across the gulf of years. The lighting in Collier's Grand Hotel room changes, cycling from late afternoon to new daybreak, the routine background sounds become different, and the room's decor is now more in keeping with the period than Collier was able to simulate. The attentive viewer will notice the additional changeover from one film stock to another.

With so much going for it, why then is *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* less

than the instant classic it might have been? The answer begins and ends with Richard Matheson's script, paradoxically one of the best in many years from this acknowledged fantasy master. It is not particularly a problem of adaptation: the film is generally faithful to Matheson's book, with what changes there are being to the film's advantage. Rather, the central failing is that Matheson gives us a terrific, glossy, romantic story-surface, but neglects to delve at all beneath that surface. The strength of his script is also its weakness. For all its suppleness and genuine feeling, the script is thin. Bysidestepping anything that might complicate the story, the script also dispenses with the depth of character and the vital resonances that could give it special meaning and poignance. After all is said and done, who are these people, Richard Collier and Elise McKenna? What do they care about? What do we know of their past lives that would highlight the triumph of their hard-won relationship? If Matheson the novelist ever provided sufficient answer, Matheson the screenwriter does not. And these are not overbearing questions to ask of a romantic fantasy, especially one with such great aspirations.

In spite of differences in plot and theme and in the stature of their actors, comparisons between *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* and *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* are instructive. Incident for incident, character for character and even in the use of its locales, *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* consistently packs in so much more information and invention. A secondary character like the two-timing writer portrayed by George Sanders in *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* is far more thoroughly drawn as a person than either of the principals in *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*. Within the context of a good story well presented, this gives *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* a much stronger impact.

When Matheson is at his best, as in the excellent scene of Elise's impromptu soliloquy on stage, he is working remarkably close to the level of the earlier film. His effective denouement seems a conscious attempt to re-create the throat-catching conclusion of *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR*. As things stand, Matheson gets in some nice touches and observant detail: the ambiguous relationship of Elise McKenna to her manager W. F. Robinson; the hinted prophetic "link" between Collier and Elise, despite which he must still overcome her initial wariness of him; the manner in which the portrait that sends Collier on his journey came to be. If the script only further fleshed out these, and other important details, we would not leave the theater feeling reasonably entertained and somewhat moved, yet still hungry for a richer, deeper, more satisfying film than we've been given. If this seems too severe a judgement, then that is only because the film comes so close to the target without squarely hitting it.

Jordan R. Fox

### FADE TO BLACK

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Still, the film can be appreciated for its witty bits and pieces, and for a fairly explicit horror film, it's remarkably good natured. Eric's slide into murderous psychosis is marked by his aunt (actually his mother) breaking into his room for a quick harangue at precisely the wrong moment in *KISS OF DEATH*, the film he is screening on his bedroom wall. Zimmerman replays the *PSYCHO* shower scene and duplicates the shot in which the shower water, increasingly tinged with black ink, flows down the drain. This is precisely how Hitchcock filmed it; the joke here is that *FADE TO BLACK* is a color film.

Zimmerman skillfully uses film clips and film history with compelling irony, probing the seductive limits of the screen image and the depths of screen illusion. Eric is attracted to Marilyn O'Connor (played by Linda Kerridge) because she looks and acts so much like her namesake, Marilyn Monroe, to whose larger-than-life poster Eric masturbates. Borrowing from Cagney's character in *WHITE HEAT*, Eric changes his name to C. Jarret, his address to 99 River Street, and plays out the inevitable "Top of the world, Ma!" finale, seeking out the Hollywood equivalent of New York's Empire State Building: Grauman's Chinese Theater.

Zimmerman depicts movie buffism as a depressing, claustrophobic cul-de-sac; the cinema, with its never-aging images, as a world of the dead. He plays on the insatiable demands of film audiences for more explicit violence—while satisfying that demand at the same time—by cutting the most gruesome sequences from *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* against the on-screen audience munching popcorn, barely distracted.

*FADE TO BLACK* implies that the influence of movies is all-pervasive, that the escape we all achieve by sitting in a comfortable seat in a dark room, shutting out the horror show that has become too characteristic of '80s life, is so soothing as to be dangerous. Eric's obsessions are simply an exaggeration of what plagues most of us at one time or another. It's just that Eric has progressed a bit further into it than the rest of us. For the moment, anyway.

David Bartholomew

Dennis Christopher's *Dracula* shows a taste for popcorn, as well as blood.



**Cronenberg comes close, but not quite, in a odd case of telepathic sibling rivalry**

**SCANNERS**

An Avco-Embassy Release. 1 81. 104 minutes. In color. Directed and written by David Cronenberg. Produced by Claude Heroux. Executive producers, Pierre David and Victor Solnicki. Director of photography, Mark Irwin. Art director, Carol Spier. Edited by Ron Sanders. Special effects, Gary Zeller, Henry Piercig. Special makeup by Dick Smith, Tom Schwartz, Chris Walas, Stephan Dupuis.

Vale..... Stephen Lack  
 Kim..... Jennifer O'Neill  
 Dr. Ruth..... Patrick McGoohan  
 Revok..... Michael Ironside  
 Pierce..... Robert Silverman  
 A. Crostic..... Adam Ludwig

Although David Cronenberg's SCANNERS is undoubtedly the best mixture of pure adventure and pure science fiction to come along in some time, this is also a film that's slapdash, erratic, and occasionally laughable. What is even more distressing is that SCANNERS' energy, intelligence and inventiveness are inextricably wedded to its shortcomings. Cronenberg has always been obsessed with the seeming split between brain and body; in the case of SCANNERS, the eye is wide open, but the mind is half-asleep.

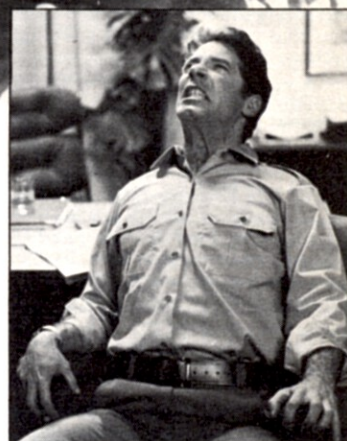
Scattered throughout the world are 236 powerful telepaths, dubbed "Scanners." Artificially created through the side-effects of a tranquilizer test-marketed on pregnant women in the late 1940s, these mutants can send and receive thoughts, control other people's actions, cause spontaneous combustion or pop open heads like grapes. The drug was marketed by a mysterious corporation called Consec, which has gained control of some of the telepaths. When an underground faction of Scanners begins systematically wiping out all the other telepaths, Consec psychopharmacologist Dr. Paul Ruth (Patrick McGoohan) recruits Cameron Vale (Stephen Lack) to track down the faction's ringleader, Darryl Revok (Michael Ironside).

After numerous assassinations, explosions, car crashes and carnage, Vale and Revok lock mental horns in Dick Smith's splendidly designed telepathic duel. In the process, Vale and Revok are revealed to be not only brothers, but mad Dr. Ruth's sons, making this one of the most extreme cases of sibling rivalry imaginable.

This sketch may suggest SCANNERS is Cronenberg's most superficial work, and, in some respects, it is. The intelligence and creativity evident in his earlier films still shines through, however. Although SCANNERS is basically an action picture, Cronenberg pours more ideas, no-



**Above: The ending that wasn't. A heavily padded stand-in for Stephen Lack gets a psychic blow-torch job by Michael Ironside (or rather, the fleeing effects man). This footage was scrapped and re-staged by make-up veteran Dick Smith. In the new, less incendiary, version (right) Lack feels the first surge of Ironside's power.**



tions and bits of business into this one film than can be found in all of the preceding season's horror and science fiction films combined.

This, however, is SCANNERS' primary problem. The storyline may be inspired but it is also underdeveloped. Inconsistencies, illogic and omissions rub shoulders with the exuberantly lively inventions of an artist who seems to have turned his back on the pessimism of THE BROOD.

For example, why is no information given about Vale and Revok's mother? What was Ruth's early relationship to sons and wife? How is it that Vale never scans Ruth, which would give him—and us—the answers to these questions? For a story that so heavily hinges on the last-minute revelation of Vale's and Revok's origin, these omissions seriously mar a fascinatingly perverse examination of two themes dear to Cronenberg's twisted heart: the father/child relationship and the notion of "family" itself.

The unveiling of this family skeleton does have its positive effects. Ruth's fatherhood lends an extra-dimensional, near-tragic status to McGoohan's character, yet another of Cronenberg's non-traditional "mad scientists." Capable of writing Scanners off as "these creatures" and describing telepathy as "derangement of the synapses"—telepathy does seem a curse in that almost all of the Scanners are misfits—Ruth can calmly condemn his youngest son to a life of misery and then suddenly

collapse into a mad, near-Shakespearean soliloquy on his accumulated responsibilities and guilt. At the end of the film, we can think back on scenes between Vale and Ruth and see a subtler, more bitter edge to them. The moment when McGoohan reaches out and takes Lack's hand after Lack has been injected with the telepathic catalyst becomes both tender and poignant in this light.

The pluses and minuses of SCANNERS' father/son motif are symptomatic of the schizoid nature of the film itself. For all of its many marvelous moments—the characterization of the mad Scanner-sculptor Pierce, the use of the "scan tone" and the communal ecstasy of the Scanners' linked minds—a blunder periodically comes along that's strong enough to upset the apple cart. The film expects us to believe that Jennifer O'Neill is younger than either Lack or Ironside, for example, or hands us a hoary device like the concealment of Revok's face during his meetings with Consec's security man. Most of this structural shabbiness seems due to the fact that the script was rewritten daily during shooting, although it's a tribute to Cronenberg's authorial skills to see how well he works under the gun.

A rushed script does not excuse the tragic casting of Stephen Lack in the crucial role of Vale. With his bulging, insect-like eyes and frail, waif-like demeanor, Lack looks like a tortured telepath, but when called upon to act, the illusion is blown away as thoroughly as the exploding head at the

film's start. Lack has the misfortune to be an inexperienced actor bracketed by two good performances. Ironside is a terrifically magnetic psychopath and McGoohan has his best part since the old PRISONER days. But when your lead actor's pathetic delivery prompts audience laughter during crucial scenes, it's obvious his casting is a major, and unforgivable, error.

For all that, Cronenberg's grip is pretty damn tight. He stages the mayhem with gleeful abandon. SCANNERS' energy level is very high, whipping past and dragging you along as if you'd snagged your coat on a highballing express train. Cronenberg also inserts some slyly surreal bits, like a burning school bus in a record store setting off the store's sprinkler system.

SCANNERS is a very good film, but it's not a great one. Cronenberg is clearly an enormously gifted, growing filmmaker, but SCANNERS shows he isn't quite there yet. To have him come this close, only to be derailed by a hastily written script and a simpering amateur, is infuriating.

Paul M. Sammon

*It startles, stuns and shocks, but is it a horror film? Is it ever!*

**THE ELEPHANT MAN**

A Paramount Pictures release. 9/80. 125 minutes. In black and white. Recorded in Dolby. Directed by David Lynch. Screenplay by Christopher De Vore, Eric Bergren and Lynch. Based on *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* by Sir Frederick Treves and in part on *The Elephant Man: A Study in Human Dignity* by Ashley Montagu. Director of photography, Freddie Francis. Edited by Anne V. Coates. Music by John Morris, with "Adagio for Strings" by Samuel Barber. Production designer, Stuart Craig.

Frederick Treves ..... Anthony Hopkins  
John Merrick ..... John Hurt  
Mrs. Kendal ..... Anne Bancroft  
Carr Gomm ..... John Gielgud  
Mothershead ..... Wendy Hiller  
Bytes ..... Freddie Jones

It may have occurred to David Lynch that the best way to apologize for a film that came too close to the mind is to follow it up with one that comes too near the heart. His first feature was the inscrutable ERASERHEAD, an expressionistic-cum-surrealistic masterpiece that burst onto the underground film circuit in 1977. Not that ERASERHEAD needs an apology, but as is true of any groundbreaking work, it encouraged hatred from the mainstream.

Many of the detractors of that earlier film are now falling all over themselves, calling Lynch's THE ELEPHANT MAN everything short of a religious experience. This is absurd. THE ELEPHANT MAN is simply a very fine film, pocked here and there with excellence (or even brilliance) and the same hallucinatory bent that made ERASERHEAD so outrageous. The difference is the new film's willingness to touch the viewer without twisting him.

But is it a horror film? Well, in that it is a more-or-less factual account of a historical friendship, it is not. But in that it is photographed by Hammer alumnus Freddie Francis in a style of horrific expressionism, in that it retells the Frankenstein story in its most basic form, in that it frequently careens in and out of reality, and in that Tod Browning's FREAKS and Terence Fisher's PHANTOM OF THE OPERA are considered horror

films—yes it is. Robert Bloch has written, "Horror is the removal of masks." That should be proof positive THE ELEPHANT MAN reigns among the best contemporary achievements in the horror genre.

Although the end of the film teeters between poignancy and romantic glory, the opening quarter is horror at its deadliest and most suggestive. Using cut-aways and angle shots, Lynch refuses to show us his main character's face until he can be shown in neutral, clinical surroundings. This may be read as a non-judgemental reservation but, at the same time, makes audience dread unbearable. Our fears are progressively enlarged by studied glimpses of the character as he presents himself in public wearing a cap, cloak and a one-eyed burly mask. We are not shown the face of John Merrick, the so-called "Elephant Man," until we've been led to anticipate the worst, until we've made an emotional investment, until we've "bought a ticket."

In addition to THE ELEPHANT MAN's moments of horror, there are moments of pure beauty. When Merrick's future patron, friend and savior Dr. Frederick Treves (Anthony Hopkins) first sets eyes on him, he is so overcome with emotion a tear leaps from his eye. Later, when an actress from the London stage meets Merrick, she exchanges with him random lines of Shakespeare and exclaims, "Oh Mr. Merrick, you aren't an elephant man at all! You are a Romeo." His sudden exposure to the possibility of his own inner beauty provokes the same response—a tear leaps from Merrick's eye. THE ELEPHANT MAN seems just as concerned with the presentation of mirrors, of self-discovery, as with the removal of masks.

Compared to ERASERHEAD, THE ELEPHANT MAN, for all its clarity, presents a far less clear view of Lynch as an artist. In those areas where the film noticeably suffers, it is



Anthony Hopkins displays *The Elephant Man* (John Hurt) to his colleagues. Paramount threw a mask over Hurt's six-hour makeup job to lure audiences.



evidently due to the constriction felt by Lynch under the original De Vore/Bergren script. The overall result is that the film feels like a Terence Fisher melodrama, liberally laced with Lynch-ian images and ideas.

Like ERASERHEAD, Lynch fills THE ELEPHANT MAN with churning engines, clouds of steam, and moaning birth-panged machinery. There are other patches in which THE ELEPHANT MAN's director asserts himself: the elephant assault on Merrick's pregnant mother; Merrick's agonizing dream of his inevitable confrontation with a hand-mirror (which begins with the Lynch-ian touch of the camera lens being swallowed into the darkness behind the eyehole in his mask); Merrick's rescue by dwarves from his "owner" Bytes' sideshow (the lakeside procession of freaks is one of the most poetic images of recent years); and the biggest, most elaborate surprise of all, a conclusion that catapults the viewer from the concrete to the spiritual—a scene that rubs nerves which have remained untouched since Stanley Kubrick unveiled his Star Child during the equally poignant conclusion of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY.

Of Lynch's script embellishments, one can take issue with only the "mirror" dream, which concludes with a physically restrained Merrick being shown his own reflection. While mirrors may be essential to Lynch's central thesis, they are overused and often misused in the film. Although we've heard that the head nurse wants no mirrors to be brought into Merrick's hospital room, reflective surfaces are never outside his reach. Such blatant oversights rob a key scene, in which Merrick is shown his reflection by the night porter, of all its implications. The obsession with mirrors provides the weak link of an otherwise strong film, because there is no evidence that Merrick has difficulty in facing the truth of what he is, and that, indeed, is what makes him such an admirable human being.

Both Anthony Hopkins and John Hurt have come into their own only in recent years—Hopkins with AUD-

REY ROSE and MAGIC in particular, Hurt contributing fascinating portrayals to the BBC productions I, CLAUDIUS and CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, as well as portraying the hapless Kane in ALIEN. Hurt allows no element of himself to peer through the pitiful Merrick facade. He is completely unrecognizable.

Hopkins is Hurt's perfect foil and complement, embodying not only Merrick's own, but Mankind's most admirable qualities—a contribution that balances the film and makes it the enriching experience that it is. Hopkins' performance may seem superior to Hurt's on the grounds of its very boldness, but compassion is the issue here, and it shines from both lead performers with perfect harmony, making the friendship of Merrick and Treves one of the finest and warmest ever filmed.

Freddie Jones is the quintessence of corrupted vaudeville, precisely what his role demands, though the real Bytes enjoyed a warmer relationship with Merrick than is depicted here for dramatic purposes.

The black-and-white photography by Freddie Francis, who unfortunately hasn't worked as a cameraman since THE INNOCENTS and has been directing horror films for those 20 years, is proof that he's lost none of his former command of the camera. Francis' muted textures and provocative angles assist—even increase—the effect of Christopher Tucker's makeup for Merrick, and help make the ingeniously understated moment when we first see the face of the Elephant Man something of a screen classic.

THE ELEPHANT MAN comes aching close to becoming that great and thoughtful horror film we all believe can still be made, but falls short of that promise due to an underlying weak mix. Even so, there is no weakness evident in the artistic integrity of David Lynch. With just two features to his credit, Lynch has developed a voice and vision uniquely his own, a signature that makes it very tempting to call this imperfect film, "perfect."

Tim Lucas

Freddie Jones, one of Hammer-helmer Terence Fisher's favorite actors, plays Bytes, the alcoholic sideshow owner who peddles John Merrick as a freak.



The queen may have awoken, but audiences were put to sleep

THE AWAKENING

An Orion Pictures release. 9.80. 102 minutes. Technicolor. Directed by Mike Newell. Screenplay by Allan Scott, Chris Bryant and Clive Exton, based on *The Jewel of Seven Stars* by Bram Stoker. Director of photography, Jack Cardiff. Produced by Robert Solo, Andrew Scheinman, Martin Shafer. Editor, Terry Rawlings. Music, Claude Bolling. Production design, Michael Stringer.

Mathew Corbeck.....Charlton Heston  
Jane Turner.....Susannah York  
Anne Corbeck.....Jill Townsend  
Margaret Corbeck.....Stephanie Zimbalist

THE AWAKENING is a genuinely perverse film, a horror movie that seems ashamed of being a horror movie. In a year marked by gratuitously violent exploitation films, this picture behaves as though it were a

candidate for a slow and very genteel edition of MASTERPIECE THEATER. THE AWAKENING treats Bram Stoker as though he were Henry James.

This is the second film to be based on Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (the other was Hammer's BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB), and the script is a fairly efficient update of the novel. Egyptologist Matthew Corbeck (Charlton Heston) discovers the tomb of evil Queen Kara. At that very moment, thanks to some flashy cross-cutting, his wife Anne (Jill Townsend) goes into premature labor and gives birth to a still-born daughter—a baby who sud-

denly, inexplicably, returns to life. Eighteen years later, Kara's spirit begins to take up on-and-off residence in the body of daughter Margaret (Stephanie Zimbalist), preparing for a complete reincarnation by killing off the rest of the cast.

This pulpish plot certainly sounds like material for a decent thriller, but THE AWAKENING doesn't seem to be very interested in building suspense. It is too busy lusting after Art, beginning with a classy Maurice Binder title sequence underlined by an equally classy Claude Bolling score. We are thus introduced to 40 minutes of exposition, picturesque Egyptian locales, and digging. Lots of digging. When the narrative finally hits the screen, around Margaret's 18th birthday, we still have to wait another 20 minutes before the film delivers its first legitimate shock: Margaret, succumbing to the spirit of the incestuous Kara, planting an erotic kiss on her father's mouth.

THE AWAKENING moves with the speed of a crippled snail, and yet the plot contains seven killings—in theory, more than enough to keep an audience edgy and expectant. The problem is most of these killings are treated in so desultory, so perfunctory a fashion—as though the film were embarrassed by their presence—that they barely manage to register. Only the murder of Corbeck's second wife, Jane (Susannah York), attempts to build up any tension, to create a sustained visual context for the violence.

Granted, there are a few mild jolts, as with a quick sequence involving a booby-trapped tomb, but the film

seems to be a thoroughly academic adventure, failing to involve its audience. This is British-TV director Mike Newell's first feature and he handles it like a student working very hard to manage a C+. The final minutes of this picture, when Corbeck is crushed by a statue and Margaret-Kara emerges triumphant, seem as hurried and uncertain as the climax of EXORCIST II, as though everyone had just wanted to finish the damn thing and go out for a drink.

The film, almost in spite of itself, has two areas of interest: the photography of Jack Cardiff and the casting of Stephanie Zimbalist. Cardiff is the dean of British lighting cameramen and his work serves as a model of how to light a set. Zimbalist is not yet a really professional actress—she doesn't have anything close to the vocal range or technique of York or Townsend—but it's clear the camera loves her. She is a classic girl-next-door, exuding sweetness, intelligence, and vulnerability. To see her turn into a howling murderess is quite eerie—the picture's one imaginative triumph.

Here is a film with a distinguished cast and a relatively lavish budget, one that utilizes experienced writers (Scott and Bryant scripted DON'T LOOK NOW, playwright Clive Exton wrote Karel Reisz' NIGHT MUST FALL) and some of the most talented technicians in the industry. And yet it is a turgid, misguided film, and its critical and financial failure may well unfortunately close the door on other ambitious horror films.

Paul Petlewski

Charlton Heston, accompanied by his possessed daughter (Stephanie Zimbalist) pokes around in places he shouldn't in Warner Bros.' THE AWAKENING.



A prime shocker emerges from the dismal B-movie swamp

ALLIGATOR

A Group 1 Films release. 11.80. 94 minutes. In color. Directed by Lewis Teague. Produced by Brandon Chase. Executive producer, Robert S. Bremson. Screenplay, John Sayles. Director of photography, Joseph Mangine. Special alligator effects, Ben Stansbury, Richard Helmer.

David Madison.....Robert Forster  
Marisa.....Robin Riker  
Police Chief.....Michael Gazzo  
Kelly.....Perry Lang

One of the nicer surprises among the current deluge of B-movie *ciné-fantastique* offerings is Group 1 Film's unpretentious and very enjoyable ALLIGATOR. The title promises nothing that hasn't been done again and again in countless big-beast (JAWS, GRIZZLY) and genetic-mutation movies (PROPHECY, SCARED TO DEATH), yet ALLIGATOR possesses such niceties as an intelligent story, believable dialogue, interesting characters and fluid direction.

In an age when big-budget concepts are king, it's reassuring that an able director, literate script and "non-

box office" actors can produce a monster movie that's both entertaining and scary—and on a modest \$1.5 million budget.

Scripter John Sayles is no stranger to this genre, having written THE HOWLING (soon to be released by Avco-Embassy) and several Roger Corman features: the tongue-in-cheek, yet visceral, PIRANHA; the "big budget" BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS; and THE LADY IN RED, which first teamed him with director Lewis Teague. In ALLIGATOR, director Teague and writer Sayles successfully inject dark humor into an otherwise tense and frightening story. The humor plays well without making the premise itself seem ridiculous, arising naturally rather than intruding as cheap-shot one-liners.

Robert Forster, fresh from Disney's awful THE BLACK HOLE, portrays an abrupt but efficient policeman whose partner (Perry Lang) becomes one of the early victims of a 25-foot-



Please, curb your pet: A prop alligator crafted by Ben Stansbury and Richard Helmer pounds the pavement in Lewis Teague's entertainingly scary ALLIGATOR.

long mutant 'gator living in a small midwestern city's labyrinthine sewer system. No one believes Forster's story, not even herpatologist Robin Riker, until an investigative reporter inadvertently discovers the grim truth. A colorful assemblage of supporting players, including Dean Jagger, comic Jack Carter and Henry de Silva, help advance the story.

Crucial effects work is unspectacular but convincing. Wisely, the film concentrates on the threat and wrath of the alligator, and not on how clever the effects technicians are. ALLIGATOR is welcome proof that not all filmmakers have lost that "secret formula" of the '40s and '50s: solid storytelling, crisp characterization, humor and imagination.

Bob Villard

# SHORT NOTICES

## THE APPLE

Directed and written by Menahem Golan. Cannon International. 11/80. In color, scope and Dolby stereo. With: Catherine Mary Stewart, Allan Love, Grace Kennedy, George Gilmore, Joss Ackland, Vladek Sheybal, Ray Shelloth.

In *THE APPLE*, disco is dead, punk is passe, new wave is no more. It's 1994 and everyone is into "The Bim," a drug-induced, sex-enhanced dance craze whose fever extends into the workings of society. Behind "Bim" is an all-powerful promoter who can give you anything and everything you want. There's the makings of a good movie here—an anti-disco, anti-conformity message, perhaps—but writer-director Menahem Golan (*THE MAGICIAN OF LUBLIN*) isn't content to stop there. Golan weaves equal parts of London burlesque, religious allegory and soap-opera romance, and comes up with a movie so bad you have to laugh at its most poignant moments.

Golan was aiming, one assumes, at the late-night appeal of *THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW* and loads up the screen with the same blend of skin, glitter and trashy transvestite images. But *THE APPLE* has none of that film's wit, and the insipid songs sound about as much like futuristic hard rock as Barry Manilow. It's not interesting enough to recommend, not outrageous enough to see anyway. Golan used British stage actors for his cast, but apparently never bothered to explain to them that every line, gesture and note need not be played for the last row of the balcony.

*Michael Kaplan*

## ALTERED STATES

Directed by Ken Russell. Warner Bros., 12/80. Color and 70mm. In Dolby stereo. With: William Hurt, Blair Brown, Bob Balaban, Charles Hallid.

In *ALTERED STATES*, Ken Russell takes us on a 2001-like journey deep into the inner space of man's mind. Scientist Eddie Jessup (William Hurt) seeks out the nature of life-after-death through experimentation with hallucinogenic drugs and sensory deprivation. In the process, he attains "altered states" of mental and physical being, regressing to earlier forms of life.

The highlights of *ALTERED STATES* are its effects, particularly Jessup's bizarre hallucinations, brought to life through Bran Ferren's computer opticals, Dick Smith's makeup, John Corigliano's haunting score and the Dolby stereo soundtrack. The film's major weakness is writer Paddy Chayefsky's story, which, although bold in its exploration of uncharted areas, tends to over-characterize and peters out at the end with its hokey, anti-climactic message. Only a director with Russell's filmic sense could give *ALTERED STATES* the visceral power it needs to rise above the "grade-B" elements of its story.

*Paul R. Gagne*



## THE DAY TIME ENDED

Directed by John "Bud" Cardos. Compass International/Manson International. 11/80, 79 minutes. Color. With: Jim Davis, Dorothy Malone, Chris Mitchum, Marcy Lafferty.

Triggered, apparently, by three suns going nova, strange things are happening to Jim Davis and family at his remote desert home. A glowing pyramid sings in the corral. UFOs buzz the house. An animated gremlin appears in a bedroom, saves a little girl from a floating gun, then disappears. A lumbering Lady Troll and Wolf Lizard wrestle to the death in the back yard. The house is sucked into a timewarp, and the family must face life on an alien world.

None of this makes any sense. *THE DAY TIME ENDED* (completed under the title *VORTEX* two years ago, then set to be released as *TIME-WARP*) takes forever to get started, then goes nowhere. Effects are trotted on, demonstrated, then disposed of; nothing ties together. If you can forgive snail-like pacing, shoddy matte work, and plot idiocies, go see the film for some excellent (albeit brief and uncredited) dimensional animation by Randy Cook, working under the general supervision of David Allen, who also went uncredited.

*Judith P. Harris*

## GNOMES

Directed and Produced by Jack Zander. CBS-TV. 11/11/80. 60 minutes. Color. With: voices of Lee Richardson, Arthur Anderson, Rex Everhart, Anne Francine, Hetty Galen.

*GNOMES* are six inches high, live more than 400 years and are happy-go-lucky do-gooders. This animated TV special, based on the best-selling coffee-table book, had so little plot that it had to be padded out to an



TERROR TRAIN

WITHOUT WARNING

## TERROR TRAIN

Directed by Roger Spottiswoode. 20th Century Fox. 9/80, 97 minutes. Color. With: Ben Johnson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Hart Bochner, David Copperfield.

*TERROR TRAIN* is efficient but unexceptional "maniac-on-the-loose" fare, elevated somewhat by Roger Spottiswoode's capable direction and atmospheric lensing by John Alcott (*THE SHINING*). A college student, frightened into psychotic hysteria by a sick fraternity prank, returns to stalk the med students responsible during a wild graduation party on a train. Visual interest is heightened by the device of masking all the party-goers, enabling the killer to roam around unnoticed. As usual, Jamie Lee Curtis is on hand as a prime target, alive and kicking into the final reel, enough to fend off the attacker's last hurrah. Ben Johnson's solidly professional conductor gives the film a real boost. *TERROR TRAIN* sets up the victims as unsympathetic jerks and sexual playthings; with the exception of Curtis, they're a vile bunch. This movie does for med students what *SERPICO* did for New York cops.

*Dale Luciano*

## WITHOUT WARNING

Directed and produced by Greydon Clark. Filmways Pictures. 9/80, 89 minutes. Color. With: Jack Palance, Martin Landau, Tarah Nutter, Christopher S. Nelson, Cameron Mitchell, Neville Brand, Sue Anne Langdon, Larry Storch.

Producer-director Greydon Clark's *WITHOUT WARNING* is an exercise in soporific silliness noteworthy only for the astounding number of down-and-out actors in it, in some sense similar to Clark's *SATAN'S CHERLEADERS*. The TV spot for the film is more exciting than the film itself.

The one original twist in this unoriginal feature has a humanoid alien (whose origin and character are left undefined) stalking and killing his human prey for sport, safekeeping his "trophies" in an abandoned shack in a remote rural locale. The plot has eccentric gas-station owner Jack Palance pitting his own hunting skill against the alien's, who attacks his victims by chucking small, frisbee-like, flesh-boring parasites at them.

Palance and Martin Landau, as a crazed Viet Nam vet, chew the scenery mercilessly, but they're the only life this movie has. Probably to minimize screen exposure of a make-up job that looks like an *OUTER LIMITS* reject, the alien is not glimpsed until his final showdown with the grizzled Palance—and then only fleetingly. *WITHOUT WARNING* lacks elementary plausibility, and the weak script indulges in ridiculous plot departures at the expense of a clear focus for suspense. When the film hits your area, catch it quick if you want to see it. It will soon close—as its title suggests.

*Dale Luciano*

hour with documentary information on gnomes. These sequences were more interesting than the insipid main story, and were accompanied by illustrations from the book far superior to the animation artwork. As a matter of fact, the shows' two Kellogg's cereal commercials had better animation. If children were not bored by the moralizing and cloying songs, they might have enjoyed *GNOMES*, but I doubt it.

*Judith P. Harris*

## POPEYE

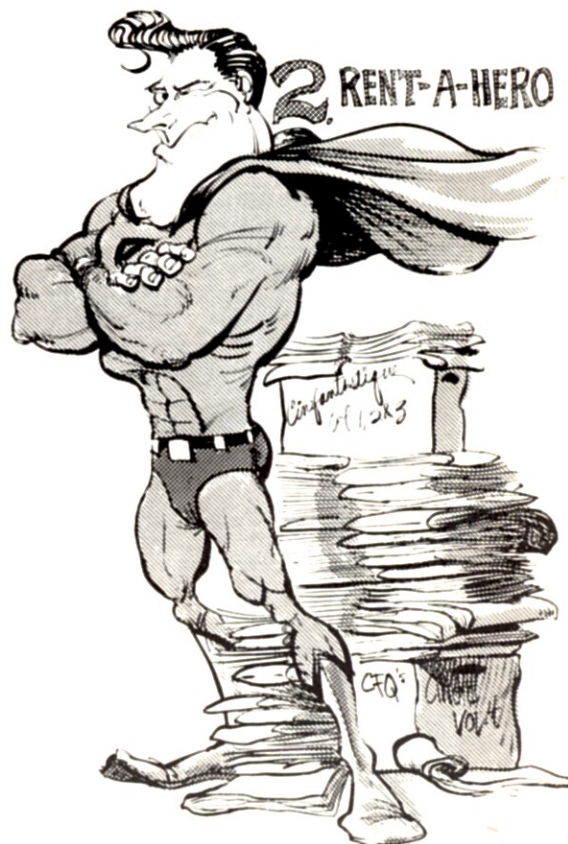
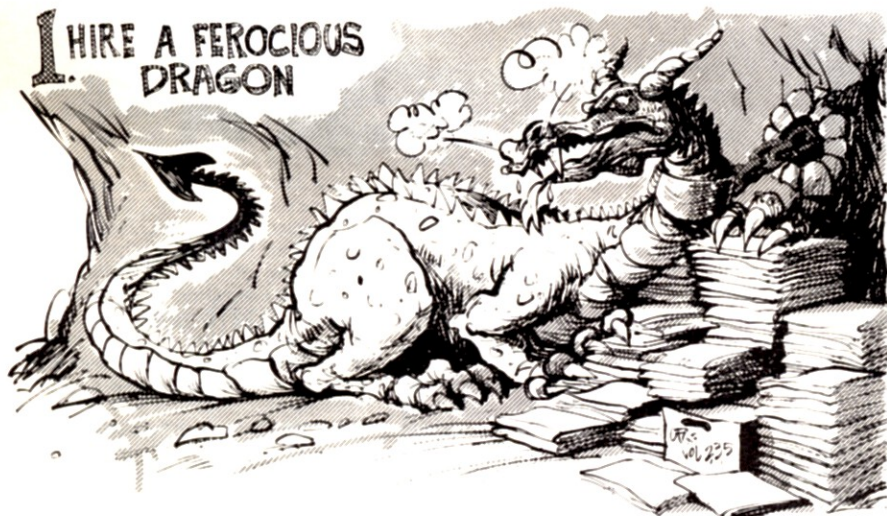
Directed by Robert Altman. Paramount/Disney. 12/80, 115 minutes. Color. With Robin Williams, Shelley Duvall, Paul Smith, Paul Dooley.

A leaden, lifeless attempt to bring E.C. Seegar's classic character to the screen. Excellent production values, acting and cinematography (by long time Fellini associate Guiseppe Rotunno) are vitiated by both Jules Feiffer's superficially faithful, yet ultimately hollow script, and Altman's curiously disaffected direction. Worst error: the notion to do the film as a musical, with Harry Nilsson's tunes ranging from powerful to tepid. Two nice bits include a prologue featuring the original cartoon mariner and perhaps the most gorgeous baby (playing Sweet'pea) to ever grace the screen. Although Robin Williams and Shelley Duvall are vocally and physically perfect for their roles as Popeye and Olive Oyl, the essential characters are lost in Altman's usual insistence on de-fusing his protagonists' activities, a la *NASHVILLE*. This technique may work for contemporary studies, but it completely misfires when dealing with such a familiar cultural icon.

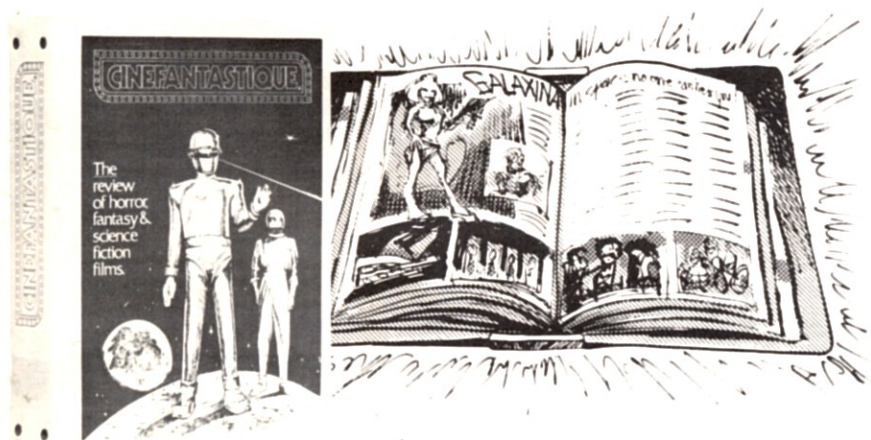
*Paul M. Sammon*



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